The Social Dimension:
A Neglected Policy Item in the Bologna Process

Dissertation

by

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Summary

Since its beginning in 1999, the Bologna Process has influenced various aspects of higher education in its member countries, e.g., degree structures, mobility, lifelong learning, social dimension and quality assurance. The social dimension creates the focus of this research. The social dimension entered the Bologna Process agenda in 2001. Despite a decade of reforms, it somehow remained as a vague element and received low scholarly attention. This research addresses to this gap.

Firstly, different meanings of the social dimension according to the major European policy actors are analysed. Unfolding the understandings of the actors revealed that the social dimension is mostly understood in terms reflecting the diversity of population on the student body accessing to, progressing in and completing higher education, with a special concern on the underrepresented groups. However, it is not possible to observe a similar commonality concerning the actual policy measures to achieve this goal. Divergence occurs with respect to the addressed underrepresented groups, i.e., all underrepresented groups or people without formal qualifications and mature learners, and the values and institutional interests traditionally promoted by these actors.

Secondly, the dissertation discusses the reflection of this social dimension understanding at the national level by looking at cases of Finland, Germany and Turkey. The in-depth analyses show an awareness of the social dimension among most of the national Bologna Process actors and a common understanding of the social dimension goals. However, this understanding has not triggered action in any of the countries. The countries acted on areas which they defined problematic before the Bologna Process.

Finally, based on these findings the dissertation discusses the social dimension as a policy item that managed to get into the Bologna Process agenda, but neither grew into an implementable policy, nor drop out of it. To this aim, it makes use of the multiple streams framework and explains the low agenda status social dimension with:

- the lack of a pressing problem definition: the lack of clearly defined indicators and a comprehensive monitoring system,
- the lack of a viable solution alternative: the proposal of developing national strategies and action plans closed the way to develop generic guidelines for the social dimension to be translated into national policy processes,
- low political perceptivity: the recent trends opt for increasing efficiency, excellence and exclusiveness discourses rather than ensuring equality and inclusiveness
- high constraints: the social dimension by definition requires more public funding which is less appreciated and strategic constraints of the actors in allocating their resources
- the type of policy entrepreneur: the social dimension is promoted by an international stakeholder, the European Students' Union, instead of the ministers responsible for higher education

The social dimension remains a policy item in the Bologna Process which is noble enough to agree but not urgent enough to act on.

Zusammenfassung

Der Bologna-Prozess begann als eine Initiative von 29 Bildungsministern im Jahr 1999 und schloss im Jahr 2010 47 Länder ein. Der Bologna-Prozess hat verschiedene Aktionslinien zu den Themen Internationalisierung, Lernen und Qualität vorgeschlagen. Während der Entwicklung des Bologna-Prozesses hat sich der Inhalt der Aktionslinien ständig geändert, neue Aktionslinien kamen hinzu. Insgesamt können diese Aktionslinien jedoch als "Abschlusssysteme", "Mobilität", "lebenslanges Lernen", "soziale Dimension" und "Qualitätssicherung" gruppiert werden. Der Aktionsbereich "Soziale Dimension" ist der Fokus der vorliegenden Dissertation.

Die soziale Dimension wurde im Jahr 2001 in die Agenda des Bologna-Prozesses aufgenommen. Diese Dimension war nur locker mit den Aktionslinien des Prozesses verbunden und erfuhr bis 2005 keine deutliche Ausformulierung als eigenständiger Aktionsbereich außer der Beteuerung seiner Existenz. Die Ziele selbst und die Mittel zur Erreichung dieser Ziele haben sich ständig geändert und erweitert, so dass die soziale Dimension umfangreicher, aber auch verschwommener wurde. Als der Bologna-Prozess das Stichjahr 2010 erreichte, war es immer noch schwierig die Hauptreformen der sozialen Dimension des Bologna-Prozesses zu erörtern (im Unterscheid zu anderen Aktionsbereichen des Prozesses). Dennoch ist die soziale Dimension immer noch ein Teil des Bologna-Prozesses, und muss deswegen einer Analyse unterzogen werden.

Die Forschung diskutiert die soziale Dimension des Bologna-Prozesses als ein vernachlässigtes politisches Element. Erstens wird der Begriff der sozialen Dimension definiert. Da der Bologna-Prozess ein Multi-Akteur und eine Multi-level-Politik-Plattform ist, ist es nicht überraschend, auf verschiedene Interpretationen der sozialen Dimension zu stoßen. Unterschiedliche Auffassungen der Bologna-Prozess Akteure (sie gelten als die internationalen Akteure im Rahmen dieser Forschung) wurden erforscht und systematisch verglichen. Die Formulierung der politischen Ziele und Leitprinzipien auf der Bologna-Ebene, unter Beteiligung der verschiedenen Akteure, ist nur eine Etappe im gesamten Prozess. Der Bologna-Prozess stellt politische Ziele und allgemeine Mittel zur Verfügung, die Details werden auf den nationalen und den institutionellen Ebenen definiert. Um seine Bedeutung auf allen Ebenen zu verstehen, ist es notwendig, auf die nationale Ebene der Interpretationen der sozialen Dimension zu schauen. Zweitens werden die Auswirkungen der internationalen politischen Ebene in Bezug auf die nationale soziale Dimension hinterfragt. In dieser Arbeit werden Finnland, Deutschland und die Türkei als Fallstudien analysiert, um die Wirkung der sozialen Dimension auf die relevante Politik sorgfältig herauszuarbeiten. Auf der Grundlage der Forschungsergebnisse in den vorangegangenen Abschnitten wird schließlich die aktuelle Position der sozialen Dimension im Bologna-Prozess diskutiert, d.h., die soziale Dimension wird unter der Perspektive eines politischen Prozesses geprüft. Als ein Element des Bologna-Prozesses wurde die soziale Dimension in die Agenda aufgenommen, konnte sich jedoch nicht entwickelen und fand keine Umsetzung. *Eine* Erklärung des gegenwärtigen Status der sozialen Dimension des Bologna-Prozesses wird durch die *Agenda Setting Theorien* gegeben. Die Untersuchung bemüht sich, diese Analysen durch die Beantwortung der folgenden Forschungsfragen auszuführen:

1. Was bedeutet die soziale Dimension des Bologna-Prozesses für die Bologna-Prozess Akteure? Was sind die verschiedenen Vorstellungen und wie unterscheiden sie sich?

2. Wie ist die Zusammenhang der sozialen Dimension mit den anderen Bereichen des Bologna-Prozesses?

3. Wie wirkt sich die soziale Dimension des Bologna-Prozesses auf die nationalen Ebenen der Bologna-Prozess-Politik in Finnland, Deutschland und der Türkei aus?

4. Was erklärt die Existenz der sozialen Dimension in der Agenda des Bologna-Prozess?

Um diese Fragen zu beantworten, wird eine induktive qualitative Untersuchung vorgenommen. In der Untersuchung wird mit einem Grounded Theorie-Ansatz vorgegangen. Dieser beginnt mit der Erforschung des empirischen Feldes und entwickelt ein konzeptionelles Verständnis der sozialen Dimension des Bologna-Prozesses. Der Ansatz zielt auf die Verbesserung der empirischen Kenntnisse durch die Erforschung und Entwickelung eines bestimmte Sets an Konzeptualisierungen, anstatt mit bestimmten Hypothesen anzufangen oder eine Theorie zu prüfen.

Kapitel 3 stellt den Bologna-Prozess dar, um die soziale Dimension in einen Kontext zu setzen. Dieses Kapitel der Doktorarbeit gibt eine reine Darstellung der Haupteigenschaften des Bologna-Prozesses, ohne eine erschöpfende Analyse zu geben. Der Bologna-Prozess wird in Bezug auf seine Hauptthemen, wie Internationalisierung, mit Lernen verbundene Fragen und Qualität präsentiert; sowie die Bereichen Mobilität, Systemabschlüsse, das lebenslange Lernen, die soziale Dimension und die Qualitätssicherung. Die soziale Dimension fällt unter die Themen, die mit Lernen verbunden sind, obwohl sehr klare Trennungen der Bologna-Prozess-Elemente nicht möglich sind.

Kapitel 4 zeigt die Entwicklung der sozialen Dimension durch die Suche nach ihrer Rolle, dem Status und Follow-up, definiert sie durch ihre strategischen und operativen Ziele sowie die Mittel, um diese Ziele zu erreichen. Zusätzlich werden in diesem Kapitel die Beziehungen der sozialen Dimension zu den anderen Bereichen des Prozesses untersucht. Kapitel 4 untersucht die soziale Dimension im Hinblick auf das unterschiedliche Verständnis der Bologna Akteure.

Kapitel 5 gibt eine Übersicht über die wissenschaftlichen Diskussionen zu den Kernthemen der sozialen Dimension, d. h., Gleichberechtigung, Gleichheit, Chancengleichheit beim Zugang zur Hochschulbildung und die Expansion der Hochschulbildung. Dieses Kapitel stellt außerdem die empirischen Elemente der Doktorarbeit dar.

Kapitel 6 zeigt die Auswirkungen der sozialen Dimension auf die nationalen Bologna-Agenden anhand der Fallstudien Finnland, Deutschland und der Türkei. Die Länder-Fallstudien zeigen die Ebene des Bewusstseins der sozialen Dimension des Bologna-Prozesses und die Maßnahmen, die aufgrund dessen beschlossen wurden. Die Strukturelemente von Hochschulbildungssystemen und der involvierten Politik seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg geben Hintergrundinformationen zu den Hochschulsystemen dieser Länder.

Kapitel 7 stellt eine Interpretation der sozialen Dimension durch die Brille des *Multiple Streams-Framework* zur Verfügung. Es erklärt das Erscheinen der sozialen Dimension als ein politisches Element, das es trotz der Aufnahme in die Agenda nicht in die Umsetzung schaffte. Die Untersuchung kommt zu dem Schluss, dass sich die Elemente der sozialen Dimension im Laufe der Zeit und in Abhängigkeit von den Akteuren geändert haben. Und

doch, nach 2007, verbanden alle Akteuren die soziale Dimension mit der Reflexion darüber, dass „die Studierenden bei ihrem Eintritt in die Hochschule, mit ihrer Beteiligung und bei Abschluss der Hochschulbildung auf allen Ebenen die Zusammensetzung der Bevölkerung widerspiegeln sollte“ (London Communiqué 2007). Der Wunsch nach Vielfältigkeit, der in diesen Worten zum Ausdruck kommt, legt einen besonderen Schwerpunkt auf die Teilnahme von Personen aus unterrepräsentierten Gruppen in der Hochschulbildung. Am Ende dieses Abschnitts wird in der Definition betont, dass es nicht nur um das formale Recht geht, sich zu bewerben, sondern auch um die reale Möglichkeit, einen Studienplatz zu bekommen und einen Abschluss zu schaffen. Die Mittel, um dieses Ziel zu erreichen, beziehen sich auf die Eintrittsmechanismen, die Vielfalt der Ausbildungswege und die Studenten-Dienstleistungen. Aus diesen Mitteln sind nur die Studenten-Dienstleistungen direkt mit der sozialen Dimension verbunden. Weitere Mittel werden für Abschlusssysteme, Mobilität und das lebenslange Lernen vorgesehen und damit nur sekundär für die soziale Dimension.

Die Analysen der sozialen Dimension zeigte, dass - mit Ausnahme der ESU - die soziale Dimension keine hohe Priorität für die Bologna-Prozess-Akteure hat. Der niedrige Agenda-Status der sozialen Dimension spiegelt sich auch in der niedrigen Aufmerksamkeit durch die Länder wider. Die Tatsache, dass die soziale Dimension vor allem durch einen Stakeholder, die ESU, aber nicht durch die Bologna-Länder gefördert wird, ist eine Erklärung für ihren niedrigen Status. Die mangelnde Aufmerksamkeit der Minister hat zu einem niedrigen Status der sozialen Dimension in der Agenda beigetragen. Als politische Plattform, ist der Bologna-Prozess ein Haupttreiber von Hochschulbildungsreformen durch die Ausführung seiner Vorschläge in den unterzeichnenden Ländern geworden.

Diese Studie argumentiert, dass die Existenz von Leitlinien Maßnahmen zur Durchführung von Reformen im gesamten Europäischen Hochschulraum erleichtert. Die Bologna-Akteure haben keine Richtlinien oder einen Handlungsrahmen für die soziale Dimension vorgeschlagen. Aus Mangel an Mitteln zu Ausführung und, noch wichtiger, auf Bologna-Ebene evaluiert und bewertet zu werden, blieb die soziale Dimension eine politische Idee, anstatt in die Politik hineinzuwachsen. Die Mittel für die soziale Dimension sind hauptsächlich auf Studentendienstleistungen begrenzt, für die die soziale Dimension keine bestimmte Reform vorgeschlagen hat. Außerdem werden, seit 2007 Studentendienstleistungen immer mehr als Mittel gewährt, um Studentenerfahrungen und den Zufriedenheitsstatus zu verbessern, und weniger für das Studenten-Wohlergehen oder zur Unterstützung des Fortschritts in der Hochschulbildung.

Die anderen Mittel für Eintrittsmechanismen und die Vielfalt der Ausbildungswege, werden hauptsächlich für andere Aktionsbereiche des Bologna-Prozesses definiert und werden voraussichtlich positive Nebenwirkungen auf die sozialen Dimension haben. Diese Situation ist besonders für unterrepräsentierte Gruppen problematisch. Die positive Nebenwirkungserwartung begrenzt das Spektrum von unterrepräsentierten Gruppen, sich angesprochen zu fühlen, d.h. die Personen, die nicht über traditionelle Bildungswege kommen und erwachsene Lernende.

Eine weitere Erklärung für den niedrigen Agenda-Status und eine Illustration der vernachlässigten Position der sozialen Dimension ist die unsystematische Überwachung bzw. Evaluierung. Der Aufruf für die Verbesserung der Erhebung von Daten zur sozialen Dimension begleitet die Soziale Dimension von Anfang an. Auch kann der Leistungsvergleich per Bestandsaufnahme als eine der Sanktionen bedacht werden, die aber

für die soziale Dimension nie stattfand. Die fehlende Kontrolle und Leitung "von oben" minimiert die Handlungsmotivation der Länder, wie das bis zum Jahr 2010 zu sehen war.

Gemäß den Ergebnissen der Fallstudien schenkten die Länder den Bologna-Prozess-Elementen, wenn sie sie als ein Problem schon vor dem Prozess definiert hatten. Jedes Land hatte bestimmte Erwartungen an den Bologna-Prozess, um seine Hochschulbildungssystem-Probleme zu beheben (d. h., die Studienzeiten verkürzen, abnehmende Abbruchquoten, Internationalisierung, usw.). Da keines der Länder Ungleichheiten im Zugang, des Fortschritts und der Vollziehung als ein Problem in Bezug auf den Bologna-Prozess definierte, dachten sie über diese Probleme nicht vorrangig, nach. Deshalb war es nicht möglich, jede Änderung in der für die soziale Dimension relevanten Politik der ausgewählten Länder für die soziale Dimension des Bologna-Prozesses zu beobachten.

Die Analyse des Verständnisses der wichtigen Akteure von der sozialen Dimension zeigte, dass die Akteure die Elemente der sozialen Dimension heterogen interpretierten. Die Grundlagen dieser Heterogenität sind institutionelle Interessen, die die raisons d'être dieser Akteure bilden. Die Werte der sozialen Dimension, verteidigt durch die ESU, entsprachen größtenteils den Werten und Interessen für die, die ESU traditionell gekämpft hatte, d.h. freien und gleichen Zugang zu Hochschulbildung und Studentenwohlergehen. Der Europarat legte den Schwerpunkt auf seine eigenen institutionellen Angelegenheiten, d. h., die Förderung der Demokratie und der Menschenrechte. Für die EUA war die soziale Dimension auf den Kontext des lebenslangen Lernens bezogen und hauptsächlich war die EUA an der Erhöhung der Institutionsautonomie von Universitäten und ihrer Finanzierung interessiert – mit der Absicht, Universitäten wettbewerbsfähiger und exzellenter zu machen. Die EC betonte die soziale Dimension in Bezug auf ihren möglichen Beitrag zum aufrecht zu erhaltenen Wirtschaftswachstum, z.B. den Zugang und die Graduierungsraten zu erhöhen, die eine dauernde Arbeitsplatzversorgung für hoch Qualifizierte und die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit sichern würden.

Das Fehlen eines gemeinsamen Aktionsrahmens in den nationalen Grundsatz-tagesordnungen kann als ein Zeichen für die Behandlung der sozialen Dimension als eine „freundliche Absichtserklärung" bestätigen, denn es wird keine Verpflichtung zum Handeln vorgeschlagen. Daher werden auch keine gemeinsamen Ziele und keine übereinstimmende und durchführbare Politik (d.h., Mittel), diese Ziele zu erreichen, genannt. Zum Schluss lässt sich sagen, dass die soziale Dimension, mit der Absicht sich zu einigen, eine noble Idee im Bologna-Prozess ist, jedoch nicht als ein dringendes Problem behandelt wird, das eine Einigung notwendig macht und zum Handeln veranlassen könnte.

1. Introduction

The higher education systems all over the world have been going through substantial changes, especially since World War II. The massive expansion of higher education and the changes it brought to higher education systems, rising role of higher education in knowledge economies and societies, changes in governance and funding, internationalisation and globalisation and increasing competition can be listed as the main trends paid attention by many scholars. Higher education institutions, countries and regions react to these trends in a variety of ways. The Bologna Process can be considered as a major reaction of the European higher education systems to these trends. The Bologna Process started as an inter-ministerial initiative of 29 countries in 1999 and since then it has directly or indirectly driven many changes in its member higher education systems. The Bologna Process calls its 47 countries for coordinated action around the themes of internationalisation, learning and quality. The process has suggested various action lines to deal with these themes. The action lines have changed in time in terms of numbers and content; though, can be grouped under degree structures, mobility, lifelong learning, social dimension and quality assurance. The initial reform suggestions concern degree structures, mobility and quality assurance and mostly have a structural nature. After 2001, reform areas with 'softer' nature are included in the Bologna Process, i.e., lifelong learning and the social dimension. The Bologna Process has an untraditional way of management based on trust among numerous actors coming from various policy backgrounds and a very flexible agenda setting processes. This enables appearance of a variety of issues and requirements depending on the actors participating in discussions. Furthermore, multi-level nature of it enables a variety in interpretation of the reforms, i.e., the Bologna level generic suggestions are transferred into national level and implemented at the institutional level.

The social dimension entered the Bologna Process agenda in 2001, very ambiguously. It was only loosely related to the action lines of the process and did not have any clarifications beyond the reaffirmation of its existence until 2005. Its goals and means to achieve these goals have kept on changing and expanding which made the social dimension more encompassing, as well as more blurred. The multi-actor and multi-level governance structure of the Bologna Process also plays a role in this ambiguity. When the Bologna Process arrived at the benchmark year of 2010, declaring the creation of the European Higher Education Area, it was still difficult to discuss major reforms on the social dimension of the Bologna Process, unlike other action areas of the process. Yet, at the same time, the social dimension is still part of the Bologna Process and as such has to be addressed.

The research discusses the social dimension of the Bologna Process as a neglected and paradoxical policy making area. Considering that the Bologna Process is a multi-actor and multi-level policy platform, it is expectable to come across with various interpretations of the social dimension by different actors. In this sense, the research firstly interrogates possible differing understandings of the social dimension. This is done by analysing interpretations of the various actors of the Bologna Process. The formulation of the policy goals and guiding principles at the Bologna level with the involvement of various actors is only one stage in the whole process. The Bologna Process provides policy goals and generic means and the details are defined at the national and even institutional level. In this sense, it is necessary to look at

the national level interpretations of the social dimension in order to understand its meaning at all levels. Therefore, secondly, the research looks at the reflection of the international level policies in relation to the social dimension on the national implementations. The research analyses Finland, Germany and Turkey as the case studies to elaborate the effect of the social dimension on the relevant policies. Finally, the research discusses the current position of the social dimension in the Bologna Process based on its findings in the previous sections. To wit, it examines the social dimension from a policy process perspective as an item of the Bologna Process that managed to get into the agenda, but could not grow into a proper policy to be implemented. It shall be highlighted that the research does not and cannot attempt at implementation analysis. *An* explanation of the current status of the social dimension of the Bologna Process is given through agenda setting theories.

The research carries out these analyses through answering the following research questions:

1. What does the social dimension of the Bologna Process mean according to the Bologna Process actors? What are the different understandings and how do they differ?
2. What is the relationship of the social dimension with the rest of the Bologna Process?
3. Does the social dimension of the Bologna Process reflect on the national level Bologna Process policies in Finland, Germany and Turkey? How?
4. *What is the explanation of social dimension's existence in the Bologna Process agenda?*

The fourth research question is developed during the course of the research to address the curiosity rose after answering the first three questions. To wit, after finding out that the first three questions are mainly answered in a negative way, it is considered to be necessary to interrogate the existence of the social dimension in the Bologna Process agenda. This situation is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

1.1. Relevance of the Topic

Since 1999 the Bologna Process has been one of the major drivers of higher education policies in its signatory countries. Improving the understanding of the process is needed to comprehend the changes occurring in the higher education policies better. Despite high attention paid to the Bologna Process reforms in general by policy makers, researchers, media and other social actors, the social dimension has never been a primary issue receiving this attention. In this sense, it continues to be an ambiguous item with respect to its definition, goals and means to achieve these goals. Therefore, there is a lack of research on the issue.

In addition to this, the social dimension is a paradoxical policy issue of the Bologna Process. As it will be discussed, the mainstream trends in public policy making, including higher education, opt for reducing the public funding as much as possible with claims of efficiency and effectiveness. The Bologna Process, on the one hand, has a focus on increasing the competitiveness and attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area and suggests measures with respect to the economic benefits of higher education. On the other hand, through the social dimension, it claims for promoting participative equity in higher education. This is a costly endeavour for the public budget and not very appreciated by the actors demanding more efficiency and effectiveness. This research aims at shedding light to this paradox, as well.

This is an applied research aiming at illuminating the social dimension of the Bologna Process by coming from the empirical side of it. The research contributes to the knowledge

body on the Bologna Process by advancing the understanding on the social dimension of it and hence the knowledge base for the development of the European Higher Education Area.

The research contributes to the development of the agenda setting theories by providing an application of it in an international setting and on the higher education policies, which has not been done before. Furthermore, it is novel in the sense that there has been various empirical and theoretical studies analysing the policy tools and evaluating the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms, there is not any study analysing the entrance of the issues into the Bologna agenda.

1.2. State of the Art

The social dimension is a new and neglected phenomenon of the Bologna Process. Despite there is a mound of research on the various aspects of the Bologna Process, focusing on the same period with this research (1999-2010), the social dimension has barely been researched. It is possible to observe an increasing attention on the issue only recently. These are mostly empirical studies. One of these is the so-called Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process Report (2010). The report is prepared by an international consortium of researchers from CHEPS, ECOTEC and INCHER and funded by the European Commission. The report aims at providing an overview of the Bologna Process reforms' implementation in all Bologna countries. The report did not aim at an evaluation of the entire Bologna Process, but focused on the degree structure, quality assurance, mobility, recognition and the social dimension. The section on the social dimension provides a definition and statistical information on the relevant indicators in the Bologna Process countries. The chapter defines achieving participative equity, in the sense of equity in access to, progress in and completion of higher education studies, as the core goal of the social dimension. To achieve this goal, the underrepresented groups are defined as the target group especially in access phase and entire student body for the completion of studies. Possible means are defined with respect to admission, flexible learning paths and student services. The length of the report constrains detailed analyses of the social dimension as a phenomenon; yet, it provides empirical information on the defined indicators for all Bologna Process higher education systems, as much as allowed by the existing data.

Another research report on the social dimension of the Bologna Process published later on in 2010 is "Evolving Diversity. An Overview of Equitable Access to Higher Education". The research is carried out by the EQUNET Consortium and funded by the European Commission. The report is meant to be the first volume of three and focuses only on access to higher education in relation to the social dimension. It discusses the obstacles for equal access due to educational background (i.e., education path to higher education), socio-economic conditions and structural problems (e.g., "curricula, governance structures, admissions standards, funding policies") for 'traditional' students (i.e., 18-22 year olds), migrants, continuing learners (professionals building upon a degree), adult learners (those without a degree or changing profession) and post-professionals (those at the end of the lifelong learning curve) (Bohonnek et al. 2010: 2). The report intends to map the information currently available on equity in higher education in Europe. The EQUNET report provides empirical information to measure the degree of (in)equality in access to higher education across countries. Similar to the Independent Assessment report, the project is based on existing data from EUROStudent and UNESCO/OECD/EUROSTAT.

Brennan and Elias Andreu (2012) analyse the impact of the Bologna Process on achieving equity and social justice in their contribution for the "Future of Higher Education - Bologna

Process Researchers' Conference" in 2011. In this context, they discuss access (recruitment), process (the status of the higher education institution and students' experience) and output (graduation). The authors discuss the possible impacts of other action areas than the social dimension on achieving equity in higher education. The focus is on the degree structures and the relevant means such as the use of the ECTS, the change of curriculum, teaching and learning methodologies. The authors claim that the use of these measures can cause further exclusion of the underrepresented groups, e.g., people from working class or lower socio-economic backgrounds, in higher education. The claims are illustrated through analysing the outcomes of structural reforms in Spain. The data are collected from students of four universities in Barcelona metropolitan area.

The Eurydice of the European Commission also prepared a report on the social dimension in 2011, "Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Funding and the Social Dimension". The report analyses the social dimension along the trends and policies on underrepresentation, dropout and the flexibility of studies. In addition to this, it provides information on tuition fees and student financial support in relation to the social dimension. The report reflects the perception of the social dimension not only in the Bologna Process context, but also for the European Union and OECD. Despite the provision of empirical information rather than a conceptual discussion seems to be the main goal of this report, the data it is based on are solely the responses of the national correspondents. In this sense, the accuracy and reliability of the information included in the report is highly doubtful and some cases wrong.

There have been studies on the access or participation (in)equalities in higher education, cf. OECD 1975, Shavit et al. 2007, Koucky et al. 2009, Brennan and Naidoo 2009, Eggins (ed.) 2010, Goastellec (ed.) 2010, etc. These studies discuss possible indicators to measure access inequalities and focus on their effect on life chances of the graduates in general, without relating them to the social dimension of the Bologna Process. Koucký et al. (2009) have developed an Inequality Index for Europe. Their model measures inequalities in access to and graduation from higher education based on parents occupational status and educational attainment with the help of various statistical models. Their study used the European Social Survey data. Further theoretical discussions on the participative equity are provided in the conceptual discussion chapter of the dissertation.

To sum up, the current literature mostly deal with the social dimension with regards to the social repercussions of participation in higher education and measuring and comparing participative (in)equity in higher education statistically. This PhD project aims at exploring the social dimension of the Bologna Process as a phenomenon in its various dimensions and interrogating its reflections at national level. It looks at the development of the social dimension as a policy issue at system level.

1.3. Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 introduces the methodology of the research project. The research has postulations of an inductive qualitative inquiry. It is developed with a grounded theory approach. It starts with the exploration of the empirical field and develops a conceptual understanding of the social dimension of the Bologna Process. In this sense, it aims at improving the understanding of empirical world through exploring it and then developing a certain set of conceptualisations rather than starting with certain set of hypotheses to test a theory. To this aim, the research initially explores main features of the social dimension according to different actors and compares them systematically. Secondly, with the help of country case

studies, the research explains the reflection of the social dimension on national level. Finally, it explains the findings using a mid-range theoretical framework, i.e., multiple streams framework. The research uses qualitative methods in the collection and the analysis of data, i.e., expert interviews and document analysis. The quantitative information is also used through the analysis of existing international statistics and survey results.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the Bologna Process. This chapter sketches main themes, action areas, means, actors and decision making processes of the Bologna Process. The chapter illuminates the basics of this major policy driver in order to contextualise the social dimension as the focus of the research, rather than getting involved in a detailed discussion on the Bologna Process.

Chapter 4 introduces the social dimension and hosts the major part of the research findings. The chapter explains the development of the social dimension chronologically. It initially analyses the documents produced at the Bologna Process level by the Bologna Follow-Up Group and the ministers. The structure developed as a result of this initial analysis is used to analyse the different understandings of the policy actors. Finally, these understandings are compared with each other. Moreover, the (un)embeddedness of the social dimension in the Bologna Process is interrogated by looking at its relationships with the other Bologna Process action areas that are introduced in the previous chapter. As a result, the chapter discusses the different understandings of the social dimension with respect to its strategic goals, operational goals and means.

Chapter 5 discusses the central themes of the social dimension. The main findings of the social dimension chapter, especially the conclusions of the goals-means scheme, create the basis of chapter 5. This chapter aims at providing an overview of scholarly discussions on the key issues of the social dimension, such as equality, equality of opportunity, the determinants of equal access, etc. In addition to this, the chapter discusses the expansion of higher education and impact of access policies on achieving equity in access. These concepts are discussed in order to enhance the main line of arguments developed based on the empirical findings.

Chapter 6 discusses the reflections of the social dimension on national policies by looking at Finnish, German and Turkish cases. After introducing the higher education systems, the countries' involvement in the Bologna Process and their participation policies briefly, the chapter looks at the development of the social dimension in the selected countries, i.e., the level of awareness of the social dimension at the national level. Next, the research introduces the implementations on the social dimension means during the last decade (2001-2010) and interrogates whether there has been a direct policy impact of the social dimension on them. The chapter concludes with a comparison of the developments in the selected countries. This comparison shows whether there are patterns concerning the situation of the social dimension in the countries or not.

Chapter 7 is composed of three major parts. The first section summarises the main conclusions of the dissertation and explains the need for further analysis. This section functions as a bridge between the empirical findings and the final theoretical analysis. Meaning, the empirical findings identify the social dimension of the Bologna Process as an existing phenomenon which in a way got stuck on its way to become a proper policy. In the second section, the research turns to policy studies and specifically agenda setting theories to shed a light on this situation. The research introduces the multiple streams framework as the framework used in this research. The third section provides *an* interpretation of the research

findings through the lenses of the multiple streams framework. By this means, it explains the existence of the social dimension as an item which managed to get into the Bologna Process agenda and remained there without becoming a proper, implementable policy.

2. Methodology

2.1. General Research Premises

Higher education research, as an interdisciplinary field, mostly has a case oriented approach. Most of the research topics concern problems, e.g., the employability of graduates, the internationalisation of higher education and research and the implementation analyses of reforms such as the Bologna Process reforms. In this sense, it is mostly carried out as applied research which aims at improving the understanding of people on the nature of a problem to intervene and hence control more effectively (Patton 2002: 217). The purpose of this research is to contribute to the body of knowledge on the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The research inquires about the changes occurring on the social dimension of the Bologna Process at the European and the national levels. This is a naturalist research and has the following qualities (Miles and Huberman 1994: 6):

> - "The researcher's role is to gain a 'holistic' (systemic, encompassing, integrated) overview of the context under study: its logic, its arrangements, and its explicit and implicit rules.
> - The researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors 'from the inside', through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding (*Verstehen*), and of suspending or 'bracketing' preconceptions about the topics under discussion.
>
> [...]
>
> - A main task is to explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations.
> - Many interpretations of this material are possible, but some are more compelling for theoretical reasons or on grounds of internal consistency.
> - Relatively little standardised instrumentation is used at the outset. The researcher is essentially the main 'measurement device' in the study.
> - Most analysis is done with words. The words can be assembled, subclustered, broken into semiotic segments. They can be organised to permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyse, and bestow patterns upon them."

Some of the abovementioned features are determining this research design and hence deserve further explanations: holistic perspective and constructivism.

According to the holistic perspective, the whole is considered complex and greater than the sum of its parts. In this sense, gathering "data on multiple aspects of setting under study to assemble a comprehensive and complete picture of the social dynamic of the particular situation or programme" is considered essential (Patton 2002: 60). The research analyses the social dimension in the whole of the Bologna Process and looks at its different explanatory features, none of which would be able to explain the phenomenon alone sufficiently. In doing this, it provides "thick descriptions" of the social dimension.

Another defining approach in this research is constructivism. The research does not assume the existence of an independent, external reality that can be analysed and predicted. This assumption is discussed by Charmaz as constructivist grounded theory approach. In this approach the real and the true are distinguished from each other. "The constructivist

approach does not seek truth – single, universal, and lasting", it assumes the existence of a real world which is shaped by individuals' perspectives (Charmaz 2000: 523). The research constructs an interpretation of the social dimension of the Bologna Process by analysing different realities of it, rather than claiming the truth about the social dimension. It does not tell how the social dimension should be, but rather analyses different policy actors' perceptions of the social dimension. It aims to explore certain patterns in the definition of the social dimension based on the researcher's and her sources' interpretation. In this sense, the empirical knowledge is accepted as relative and mutually created by the actors through their perceptions of and interactions with the social dimension and by the researcher through her interpretation of the actors' perspectives and her interactions with the research topic (Miles & Huberman 1994: 8). This approach has been kept in mind in the collection and analysis of all types of data.

This research explores the social dimension as an ambiguous and complex issue. It is ambiguous because there is no clear definition and a common understanding of it. Therefore, the research initially aims to explore its definition and elaborate different understandings of it. The issue is complex because it involves policy areas beyond higher education policies, i.e., education policies in general, taxation, welfare/social care policies, etc. and involves various actors. Secondly, due to this ambiguity and complexity, in-depth analysis of the issue is considered to be necessary and primary. This chapter aims at explaining the methodological steps taken in order to answer the research questions. The following sections introduce the research questions and describe the main features of the research design.

2.2. Research Questions

The research has three main parts: the exploration of the social dimension phenomena at the Bologna level, interrogations of the possible reflections at the national level and the explanations of the empirical findings through a mid-range theoretical framework. The research questions follow this line of approach by asking:

1. **What does the social dimension of the Bologna Process mean according to the Bologna Process actors? Are there different understandings and if so, how do they differ?**
   These questions are answered through the following sub-questions:
   1.1. What is the role, status and monitoring of the social dimension in the Bologna Process?
   1.2. What are the strategic goals of the social dimension?
   1.3. What are the operational goals of the social dimension?
   1.4. What are the means of these goals of the social dimension?

The research question 1.1 looks at the overall development of the social dimension as an action area, the 1.2 and 1.3 look at the issues that the social dimension deals with and the 1.4 provides information about the policy tools of the social dimension. It shows whether European level actions are defined for the social dimension. These sub-questions are answered for each Bologna Process actor separately. The answers are compared to conclude the development and the main features of the social dimension.

2. **What is the relationship of the social dimension with the rest of the Bologna Process?**
   2.1. Is there a relationship at all?
   2.2. Are there common or conflicting elements between the social dimension and the other action areas of the Bologna Process?

The second research question interrogates the (un)embeddedness of the social dimension in the Bologna Process. It aims to show its relations with the rest of the Bologna Process.

3. **Does the social dimension of the Bologna Process reflect on the national level Bologna Process policies in Finland, Germany and Turkey? How?**
   3.1. Are the main Bologna Process actors of these countries aware of the social dimension? How?
   3.2. Are above mentioned goals and means of the social dimension of the Bologna Process observable in the relevant national policies?
   3.3. Have these policies changed since 2001? If yes, have these changes happened due to the social dimension of the Bologna Process?

The third research question is formulated with the expectation of a form of reflection, without assuming a top-down approach. In this analysis, one aim is to judge the degree of implementation and another aim is to illustrate good examples through case studies hinting improvement suggestions. In this sense, after defining the key features of the social dimension action area, different policy implementations at the national level were going to be analysed. However, the third research question is answered in a negative way and necessitated the fourth research question which analyses the existence of the social dimension in the Bologna Process agenda:

4. **What is the explanation of the social dimension's existence in the Bologna Process agenda?**
   4.1. How did the social dimension enter into the Bologna Process agenda?
   4.2. Did a "window of opportunity" open for the social dimension? What have been the repercussions for the social dimension?

2.3. Research Design

This doctoral research has a flexible design which was not decided strictly in the beginning but developed during the research. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) put it the "design of a naturalistic inquiry (whether research, evaluation or policy analysis) *cannot* be given in advance; it must emerge, develop, unfold." (cited in Patton 2002: 44). The research is designed in the most convenient way to answer the research questions. The nature of data, collection methods and analysis are qualitative. The grounded theory approach and case studies comprise the main elements of this research design.

2.3.1. Grounded Theory

The grounded theory approach was developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s. Unconventionally, it is meant to build a theory rather than to test a theory. As Glaser and Strauss defined in *the Discovery of the Grounded Theory* (1967: 2) grounded theory is about "the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research". In this sense, the grounded theory operates from a correspondence perspective aiming to generate explanatory propositions that correspond to real-world phenomena (Patton 2002: 489). It is an inductive methodology.

Strauss and Corbin (1998: 11) describe the grounded theory as "a nonmathematical process of interpretation, carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organising these into a theoretical explanatory scheme." To facilitate this, it offers a set of coding procedures, systematic inductive guidelines as a framework

(Charmaz 2000: 509). The concepts and categories appearing as a result of the analytic processes create the building blocks of a theoretical framework. The final aim is building "middle range theoretical frameworks to explain the collected data" (Charmaz 2000: 509) or contributing to the improvement of an existing theory.

Glaser and Strauss list the main components of its practice as (Charmaz 2006: 5-6):

- "simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis
- constructing analytic codes and categories from data not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses
- using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis
- advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis
- memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps
- sampling aimed toward theory construction, not for population representativeness
- conducting literature review after developing an independent analysis."

Coding creates the basic step of analysis in grounded theory. It is defined as "naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorises, summarises, and accounts for each piece of data" (Charmaz 2006: 43). Strauss and Corbin define coding as an analytic process, through which data are fractured, conceptualised and integrated to form a theory (1998: 3). In this process, the focus is not on the words themselves, but on their meaning. The codes then are systematically grouped into categories in order to handle them easier (Corbin & Strauss 1998: 113). **Codes** "are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information complied during a study" (Miles & Huberman 1994: 56). Codes are developed based on concepts. A **concept** "is a labelled phenomenon, an abstract representation of an event object or action/interaction that a researcher identifies as being significant in the data" (Corbin & Strauss 1998: 103). **Phenomena** "are important analytic ideas that emerge from our data" (Corbin & Strauss 1998: 114).

In time, different approaches of coding developed in the grounded theory approach. The main streams can be called as Straussian and Glaserian approaches. Strauss and Corbin define different coding strategies, i.e., open coding, axial coding and selective coding. **Open coding** is completely based on the data, the concepts together with their properties and dimensions are inductively generated from the data (Corbin & Strauss 1998: 143). **Axial coding** helps to relate the categories with subcategories. It is "termed 'axial' because coding occurs around the axis of the category, linking categories of the level of properties and dimension" (Corbin & Strauss 1998: 123). Finally, there is **selective coding.** It is "the process of integrating and refining categories" which are generated and linked during open and axial coding. This final process integrates major categories and aims at "forming a theoretical scheme" and building a theory (Corbin & Strauss 1998: 143). Similar steps are defined as initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding in the Glaserian approach (Charmaz 2006). The differences between coding definitions of different scholars are hidden in details. Strauss and Corbin's approach, as pointed by Corbin, has positivist leanings and focuses on the presentation of a well-defined coding scheme which can produce causal explanations. In the Glaserian approach the idea is to stay close to the data and be open to emerging new categories. What they commonly suggest is simultaneous, systematic and continuous coding processes, their constant comparison and explanation.

2.3.1.1. Application of the Grounded Theory Approach in the Dissertation

Since the first goal of the research is exploring whether there is a common definition of the social dimension and if yes, what it is; if no, what different understandings are, the research does not have an *a priori* hypothesis to be tested. The basic steps briefly defined above do not differ so much between the two streams of grounded theory. This research takes grounded theory principles as a guideline which includes the basic steps of conceptualising, coding, categorising, comparing and explaining the relations between these categories to build an explanatory conceptual framework. In the initial phase of coding, open coding strategy is followed. The concepts are searched in the documents through coding the paragraphs in order to discover the items that are somehow related to the social dimension of the Bologna Process. This phase is followed by line-by-line analysis in order to define the properties of each concept. In addition to this, the nature and meaning of the entire document is considered in order to contextualise the coding. Different types of documents are treated differently during coding and analyses.

During the coding process a myriad of codes appeared. These codes changed in time, some of them disappeared, some appeared and some divided or merged. These codes are linked to each other through cyclical recoding and the systematic comparison of data from different actors and from the same actor in time. This means, the coding scheme is revised with the analysis of each new document. This continues until a level of saturation is reached. These codes are gathered under categories during which the relations among the codes are elaborated and became clearer. These systematic comparisons are also fed by the knowledge originating from the literature on the key themes (cf. Chapter 5). By this means, the risk to overlook certain properties or dimensions in the data is reduced. As a result of simultaneous coding, recoding and systematic comparison, the following categories are developed as the backbone of analysis:

Table 2.1 Coding Scheme of the Social Dimension Analysis

Categories	Subcategories	Codes (examples)
Development		
	Status	constituent, principle, overarching
	Role	balancer, supporter
	Follow-Up	seminars, data collection, stocktaking
Strategic Goals		
	Strengthening social cohesion and reducing inequalities	knowledge acquisition, social cohesion
	Reflecting the diversity	participative equity
	Maximising the level of knowledge, skills and competences	personal development
Operational Goals		
	Making quality higher education equally accessible to all	equal access, increasing access, widening access
	Ensuring completion of studies	graduation, completion, dropout

Means	Widening participation	broadening participation
	Admission mechanisms	admission requirements, recognition of prior learning
	Flexible learning pathways	ECTS, qualifications frameworks, student workload, part-time study
	Student services	financial aid, accommodation, counselling and guidance, daily services
Surrounding Issues		
	Higher education as a public good and public responsibility	nature of higher education
	Student involvement in the governance of higher education	student participation

The content of these categories are explained in detail in the social dimension chapter. In this chapter, their development logic and relations (axial coding) are explained. The basic idea of the scheme originates from the nature of the ministerial documents. The ministerial communiqués and declarations are taken as the primary documents of analyses due to their superior position in defining the development of the Bologna Process, i.e., these documents are agreed by all ministers to be transferred to the national level. The ministerial documents are prepared in the form of generic goal formulations. In the search for a definition of the social dimension, a compatible approach is adopted which looks at the goal and means to achieve these goals. Strategic goals are understood as the ultimate aims of the social dimension in the Bologna Process, operational goals as the intermediary objectives to reach the strategic goals and the means as the concrete actions to achieve these goals.

The coding process also brought out further categories that can neither be analysed as core elements of the social dimension, nor can be neglected. These are the categories explaining the development of the social dimension by looking at its status, role and follow-up and its surrounding issues which had a discontinuous relationship with the social dimension. These categories have secondary importance for the analysis; nevertheless, they are necessary for a wider and more complete understanding of the social dimension. In the comparative development of categories, the secondary categories especially help to show that the social dimension is a moving target. Since its appearance in the Bologna Process in 2001, it has changed considerably and the elements of the secondary categories elaborate this progression.

Since the grounded theory approach requires constant comparison and analytical development of the coding scheme, it is possible to observe a flow in the analysis from inductive approaches, i.e., exploring codes and constructing categories, to deductive approaches, i.e., applying the goals-means scheme in the analyses. This coding scheme is applied in analysing each actor's understanding of the social dimension, as well as interrogating the reflection of the social dimension at the national level. The inductive codes

are used for the coding of the documents and interview transcripts. This partially deductive approach is explained further in the case studies section.

2.3.2. Country Case Studies

As mentioned above, inductive categories define the main features of the social dimension at the Bologna level. The country case studies illustrate the reflections of these features at the national level policy changes. The case study part of the research has a deductive approach by looking at single country conditions. This phase aims at putting flesh on the bones developed in the exploratory stage of the research. The case studies follow-up the features of the social dimension at the national level developments.

Stake (2000: 437) defines a case as a "bounded system" which has certain patterns and identifies three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. In the **intrinsic case study**, the main goal is to improve the understanding of a particular case. The focus of all research is the case under study and not to "understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon" or theory building. The **instrumental case study** looks at a case to see the manifestation of research concerns. In this type, the "case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else". The extension of the instrumental case to several cases is called the **collective case study**. The cases "are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps theorising, about a still larger collection of cases". This research conducted collective case studies in order to better understand the social dimension of the Bologna Process at the national level. Initially, each case is analysed and written separately in order to gain a full understanding. The units of analysis are the higher education systems of Finland, Germany and Turkey. Next, the cases are examined in search of a pattern or lack of it. This strategy can be understood with respect to Yin's "replication" strategy (2003: 47). Accordingly, the aim is to predict the availability of either similar results (literal replication) or "contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)". The goals-means scheme is used as the framework of analyses. Despite providing predictions is not the primary aim of the research, the analysis of the case studies provides certain patterns that are expectable in similar cases.

2.4. All about the Data

2.4.1. Scope of the Data

Patton explains the scope of applied research findings with respect to "time, place, and condition" (Patton 2002: 217). The PhD research deals with the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The collected data dates from 1999, the beginning of the Bologna Process, to 2010, the benchmark year for the establishment of the European Higher Education Area. Even though it is not possible to limit social dimension related issues, e.g., equality of opportunities, access to higher education, student services, etc. to a short period of time, the research examines only the properties and the reflections of the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The data from the selected countries also focus on this period and the social dimension relevant issues.

Data are gathered purposefully in this research. This research aims at providing in-depth information on the social dimension of the Bologna Process, rather than producing generalisable results (Patton 2002: 230). The data gathering can be explained at two levels: Bologna level and the national level. At the Bologna level, initially, data are gathered in a comprehensive way from all actors involved in the Bologna Process, meaning all

international stakeholder organisations and ministerial level representatives responsible for higher education in 46 countries. The main policy actors of the Bologna Process are introduced in the chapter on the Bologna Process. Briefly, the list contains the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the UNESCO, the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the European Students' Union (ESU), the Education International Pan-European Structure (EI), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the BUSINESSEUROPE within the context of this research. Secondly, the number of actors analysed is reduced based on their relevance to the social dimension. To wit, the actors who paid attention to the social dimension are included in further data collection. To this end, the actors' all reported activities in the Bologna Process context during the last decade, i.e., the organisation of workshops, research, publications (policy and statement papers, reports, etc.) are looked at and the actors which have had activities in relation to the social dimension are included in the analysis. Please see Annex VI and Annex VII in order to see the activity list of the actors. It shall be noted that this list is based on the European stakeholders and not the countries. This decision is based on the same relevance criterion. While stakeholders have rather stable interests on the Bologna Process issues, it was not possible to observe the same continuity in the countries.

The country analyses aim at showing the diversity and deepen the understanding of their conditions and provide thick explanations on the reflection of the social dimension in these countries. Three countries, out of 46 Bologna Process countries at the time, are selected: Finland, Germany and Turkey. The cases are different from each other in size, geographical location, state structure, societal compositions, the structure of their higher education systems and participation policies for higher education. This choice treats the great heterogeneity of the cases as an advantage "in capturing the core experiences and central, shared" patterns of the social dimension (Patton 2002: 235).

Finally, convenience is taken into consideration. The researcher has lived in the selected countries and studied in these higher education systems, which provided her the advantages of direct observation, such as better understanding of and capturing the context by giving the opportunity "to be open, discovery oriented, and inductive, because by being on-site, the observer has less need to rely on prior conceptualisations of the setting" and "to see things that may routinely escape awareness among the people in the setting" (Patton 2002: 262). In addition to this, the researcher has had the opportunity to participate in some events of the Bologna Follow-Up Group. This information strengthens the analysis by supporting the researcher to have wider and fuller understanding of the selected higher education systems, as well as the Bologna Process as the main context.

2.4.2. Types of Data

Typically, qualitative data consists of direct observation, written documents and interviews. Despite direct observation enhanced the contextual understanding of the researcher, this type of data is not used. Interviews and written documents comprise the main sources of data for this research.

2.4.2.1. Written Documents

This group comprises the substantial amount of data in this research and hence introduced in detail. The documents were collected at two levels: the Bologna and the national level. Type of documents includes reports (e.g., workshop or other international meetings' reports,

progress reports), policy papers, ministerial communiqués, national legislations, formal evaluations or studies, as well as survey data.

The Bologna Level

The official and semi-official documents produced by the main policy actors of the process are gathered. The documents were accessed through following the information provided in institutional websites and these stakeholders' publications. In this research, the Bologna Process policy actors are considered as institutions rather than individuals and data are collected accordingly. Understandably, not all the documents were produced by the same individuals or within the same (funding) programme which resulted in nuances in some cases. In order to reduce this effect, the research focuses on the regular reports of the actors when available and the documents produced directly in relation to the Bologna Process.

Documents from the Ministers Responsible for Higher Education

The ministers responsible for higher education meet biannually, together with the members and consultative members of the Bologna Process. In the end of each meeting, the ministers issue a communiqué or a declaration. These documents, despite being very brief, announce the main goals of action for the Bologna Process. The ministers have so far signed seven of such documents in 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010. The ministerial communiqués and declarations are included as the strategic documents that are commonly accepted by all countries. Therefore, they are considered with a weight in this research as the main reference point in the analysis. However, these documents are documentation of common objectives rather than clearly structured and coherent statements.

Bologna Secretariat's Reports

The function of these reports is stated in the beginning of the very first of them:

> "The follow-up group decided that, besides the contributions coming from the stakeholders and the outcomes of the seminars and meetings, a specific report should be prepared for the Ministers of Education" (Lourtie 2001: 2)

These reports compile the events and conclusions of two years and present them to the ministerial meetings. The reports for the 2001 and 2003 ministerial meetings were prepared by independent researchers in the field. The 2005 General Report was written by the BFUG, the 2007 and 2009 reports were prepared by the Bologna Secretariat. In this sense, the latter reports are more useful in extracting Bologna level understandings. The reports are included due to their effect on the understandings of the ministers of the two years events and hence the next ministerial communiqué. Moreover, these reports include contributions prepared by the Bologna Process members and consultative members. These contributions showed the actions taken by those actors during the last two years in relation to the Bologna Process.

BFUG-Working Group on Social Dimension and Data on the Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries Report

In the 2005 Bergen meeting, the ministers asked the BFUG to work on the social dimension. The Working Group on Social Dimension and Data on the Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries[1] worked to define the social dimension and present data on the social and economic situation of students and the mobility of staff and students, as well as to recommend proposals for future stocktaking. The recommendations prepared to this end are

[1] Please see the annex on the stakeholder activities for the composition of the working group.

the most comprehensive and essential work focusing on the social dimension and influenced the ministers' decisions substantially.

Stocktaking Working Group's Reports

The ministers called for the stocktaking exercise in the Berlin meeting in 2003 with the aim of measuring "the progress made in implementing certain reforms within the European Higher Education Area". As a response to this call the BFUG formed a working group in 2004 to carry out this exercise and produce a stocktaking report every two years (BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking 2005: 9). The working group developed indicators to measure the progress in the implementation of the reforms. These indicators are quantified and presented in the form of colours (dark green: excellent performance, light green: very good performance, yellow: good performance, orange: some progress has been made, red: little progress has been made). The main sources of information for the stocktaking reports are the national reports prepared by the Bologna Process countries and the EURYDICE. The Stocktaking Working Group developed a standard report template to be filled, yet the accuracy of the content is totally dependent on the countries (BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking 2005: 11). The 2007 report is validated by the Eurydice report (Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe), the EUA report (Trends V), the ESIB survey (Bologna With Student Eyes) (BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking 2007: 9) and in 2009 also by other working groups (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 24).

The European University Association's Documents

The main written input of the EUA to the Bologna Process has been through the Trends reports. These reports are prepared to evaluate the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms and provide background information for the process. All Trends reports focus on the structural changes in relation to the two/three cycle degree structures, quality assurance, mobility and lifelong learning action areas, as well as general issues of implementing the reforms. The reports are prepared biannually before the ministerial conferences and the project is funded by the European Commission. The information is largely gathered through survey questionnaires and after 2005 also through site visits. While the Trends I and II reports include the views of "the ministries of higher education and the rectors' conferences", the Trends III (2003) report includes the views of governments, employers, higher education institutions and students concerning the changes and developments concerning the actions lines of the Bologna Process (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 7). In addition to the Trends reports, all declarations and reports of the EUA available in the institutional website[2] and produced in 1999-2010 in relation to the Bologna Process are analysed.

The European Students' Union's Documents

The ESU published various policy papers, declarations and reports addressed to the Bologna Process. Among them the "Bologna With Students Eyes" reports are produced biannually in 2003-2009. The reports are prepared to measure the change due to the Bologna Process. It is always a comparison with two years before. While the 2003 report was funded by the ESU, the others were funded by the European Commission. These reports aim at evaluating the progression of the Bologna Process from the students' perspective. The main source of information is questionnaires. For the 2003 report, information is collected through questionnaires from the ESU member national students' unions, 37 countries in 2003, 34 countries in 2005, 36 countries in 2007 and 33 countries in 2009. The questionnaires cover all

[2] http://www.eua.be/eua-work-and-policy-area/building-the-european-higher-education-area.aspx

aspects of the Bologna Process and try to gather both institutional and national level information. Additional information sources are interviews, educational websites and other publications (ESU 2005b:7).

Other official publications are also collected. In 2005, the ESU published "The Black Book of the Bologna Process". This report was prepared as a mid-term assessment of the Bologna Process implementations and based on case study reports. In 2010, the ESU published "Bologna at the Finish Line". This document was prepared as a stocktaking of the policy developments in relation to the Bologna Process in the last 10 years. This publication is based on the analysis of key documents, e.g., "stocktaking reports, general reports for the Ministerial conferences, working group reports, Bologna-seminars" and the ESU's and other stakeholders' publications and statistics (ESU 2010: 11). It also made use of questionnaires responded by full members of the ESU from 26 countries and interviews conducted on key actors from European stakeholders, i.e., the EUA, the ESU, the EURASHE and the European Commission (ESU 2010: 13). In addition to these, all policy papers and policy statements of the ESU available in the institutional website[3] and produced in 1999-2010 in relation to the Bologna Process are analysed.

The European Commission's Documents

The European Commission did not produce regular reports, unlike the previous actors. The policy papers and the communications of the European Commission are gathered. In addition to this, the Eurydice prepared the "Focus on Higher Education in Europe" reports in 2003-2010. These reports aim at giving an overview of the mostly structural reforms carried out in relation to the Bologna Process. The reports are based on the information provided by the units in 31 member countries of the Eurydice network and by national representatives in the Bologna Follow-Up Group of brief country overviews.

Other Actors' Documents

The publications of the Council of Europe, the UNESCO, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the Education International Pan-European Structure (EI) and the BUSINESSEUROPE do not include regular reports. The documents for these actors are the ones provided in their websites[4] in relation to the Bologna Process. All of them are included.

The National Level

The national level documents are the national reports for the Bologna Process (2002-2009). These reports are demanded by the BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking and prepared based on a certain format since 2005. Secondly, the reports and policy papers produced by the national level Bologna actors are analysed. These actors are introduced in the case studies in detail. The documents from these actors are searched in their institutional websites. Thirdly, laws, higher education regulations and other relevant legislation are analysed. Fourthly, existing statistics are included. These statistics are provided either by international

[3] www.esu-online.org

[4] Council of Europe:
UNESCO: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/higher-education/,
EURASHE: http://www.eurashe.eu,
EI: http://www.ei-ie.org/en/websections/content_detail/3266
BUSSINESSEUROPE: http://www.businesseurope.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=571

institutions, i.e., OECD, UNESCO Statistics, EUROStudent or by national statistics offices and statistics units from the relevant institutions.

2.4.2.2. Interviews

Semi-structured expert interviews were conducted in Finland, Germany and Turkey and with the representatives of the above mentioned international stakeholders involved in the Bologna Process. The interviews were carried out within the context of the Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process Project. Two types of interview guidelines were prepared in advance; one for the European level stakeholders and another for the national Bologna Process actors. The guidelines provided the main set of issues to be asked about during the interview, rather than an exact wording of the questions; it functioned as a checklist. The researcher followed the lead of the interviewee in ordering and wording of the questions. Depending on the expertise of the interviewee, certain topics were omitted or asked more in detail without losing the focus on the social dimension (Patton 2002: 343).

Interviewees were selected according to their expertise area and their involvement in the Bologna Process in order to maximise the richness of the information gathered. Hence, at the Bologna level all relevant stakeholder representatives (i.e., the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the EUA, ESU and the EI) and at the national level the relevant Bologna Process actors (i.e., representatives of the ministries, student unions and the Bologna Experts' team members) were interviewed. It shall be noted that in selecting the interviewees, their attention for the social dimension is taken as a criterion. Please see Annex I for the list of interviewees and the dates and places of the interviews and Annex II for the interview guidelines.

The importance of the interviews is the information they provided, rather than the wordings or specific conditions of the interviewees. The interview questions were designed to learn about the experts' opinions (to gather information on the policy making and implementation processes), knowledge (to gather unwritten factual knowledge of the experts) and background (positions and years of experience, etc.) (Patton 2002: 243). The interviews were conducted to explore the specific knowledge of the relevant policy actors which was not possible to gather from written documents. In exploring different definitions of the social dimension, the interpretations of the stakeholders comprise an important source of information. While written documents provide information on the actions taken or suggested to be taken by these actors on the social dimension, interviews are expected to provide information on the rationales of these actions, the importance given to the social dimension by these institutional stakeholders, opinions and awareness of these actors on the social dimension issues. By this means, the status of the social dimension in the Bologna Process is expected to be embedded better.

2.4.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis already started with the collection of data and basically took place during the coding processes as explained above. In this section the technical side of the process is mentioned. During coding, the researcher made use of software. The basic documents are coded with the help of the MaxQDA programme. The practical help of the programme in managing the data, i.e., organising large amount of data, the flexibility in changing and refining codes and categories shall be acknowledged. In the coding and recoding process, the memo function of the software helped the researcher to keep a clear track of the changes and conclude patterns. The memos contain conceptual information, explanations for the specific

codes and in this sense created the basis for the development of the explanations of the relations among different codes.

2.5. Quality and Credibility Issues

Conventionally, the lack of validity and reliability tests, which are available for quantitative research, is considered as a disadvantage for qualitative research. Concerning the quality of the data Charmaz (2006: 18) mentions the importance of gathering "rich, substantial, and relevant data" which are useful, suitable and sufficient for explaining the phenomena under study. In order to prove this quality measure, the data section provided extended information on data gathering. All available and relevant written documents are gathered. Concerning interviews, the researcher had the opportunity to reach many key stakeholders with the help of the international research project she was working on.

Concerning analyses, the provision of thick descriptions and triangulations are considered as the main guarantors of quality and credibility of this research. The provision of thick descriptions has already been mentioned and is rather self-explanatory. At this point, it is possible to talk about triangulation a bit more. Triangulation is "a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Stake 2000: 443).

"Denzin (1978b) has identified four basic types of triangulation: (1) *data triangulation*, the use of variety of data sources in a study; (2) i*nvestigator triangulation,* the use of several different researchers and evaluators; (3) *theory triangulation*, the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data, and (4) *methodological triangulation*, the use of multiple methods to study a single problem or programme" (Patton 2002, p. 247). Triangulation is essential to strengthen the elaborateness of empirical findings and their explanatory power. Miles and Huberman provide further details on data triangulation. This can be done by combining qualitative and quantitative data, e.g., "quantising" the qualitative information either by counting or scaling, comparison of the different types of data on the same issue or from the same source (Miles and Huberman 1994: 41). In this research data triangulation is done. The research uses multiple data types: qualitative (written documents and in-depth interviews) and quantitative (i.e. existing statistics). These data are gathered from various resources. Such a data source triangulation helps to show differences of understandings and reveals the differences between the written version and implementers' version of policies. Methodological triangulation is done through combining case studies and grounded theory approach.

2.6. Conclusion

The research methods are a wide, deep and complicated field of study. As in general in social sciences, it is mostly a matter of interpretation based on where the scholar stands. This results in different classifications and conceptualisations. This chapter explains the methodological steps taken in this research to shed light for the reader in this vast field, to justify the decisions of data collection and analyses and to increase the credibility of the results.

The use of the grounded theory approach together with the case studies is the defining feature of this research design, as well as its main complexity. The grounded theory approach suggests simultaneous data collection, sorting, refining, reducing and linking to each other and finally transforming to construct a conceptual framework. These processes continue throughout the research in a cyclical way. As a result, the research moved from

almost “knowing nothing” to certain categories and explanations on the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The country case studies illustrate the reflection of this Bologna level phenomenon on the selected higher education systems. As mentioned above, the grounded theory approach starts with a perspective to develop a mid-range theory or improving a mid-range theory. The latter situation is more frequent than the former and as well the case in this research. The findings based on the coding scheme are linked to the multiple streams framework. The multiple streams framework provides lenses for an explanation of the research findings, but not the only one. In this sense, it offers *an* interpretation of the social dimension of the Bologna Process, rather than the truth about it. The multiple streams framework and the relevant analysis are explained in Chapter 7.

3. The Bologna Process

The Bologna Process started in 1999[5] as an inter-ministerial initiative of 29 countries and by 2011 it engages 47 countries[6]. The Bologna Process aims at harmonising the higher education systems of its signatory countries and to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The Bologna Process is a complex European level policy forum with a variety of ideals and principles at work on various themes of higher education, as well as, a variety of decision making and implementation levels. The accumulative development of the process with changing items in time increases this complexity even more. This complexity can also be seen on the scholarly views on the Bologna Process. For the time being, it is not possible to observe a consensus on the primary items of the Bologna Process and definition of their contents. Scholarly work focuses on different dimensions of the Bologna Process, instead of claiming to provide a complete analysis of it (cf. Adelman 2008, CHEPS, ECOTEC & INCHER 2010, Kehm et al. 2009, Reinalda & Kulesza 2006, Witte 2006). This chapter aims at providing a discussion on the main features of the Bologna Process in order to contextualise the social dimension as the focus of this dissertation and does not claim to provide an exhaustive discussion of all Bologna Process elements. This chapter analyses the Bologna Process with respect to its main themes (internationalisation, learning related issues and quality), operational areas (mobility, degree structure, lifelong learning, the social dimension and quality assurance) and means to act in these areas (two-cycle degree structure, curriculum reform and modularisation, mobility programmes, recognition tools, flexible study paths, student services and quality assurance mechanisms). In addition to this, the management structure of the process is introduced.

3.1. The Main Themes of the Bologna Process

The Bologna Process is a dynamic and evolving policy process; but, not in the ordinary sense. The reform proposals have been communicated through ministerial declarations and communiqués and formulated in the form of goals. The ways to achieve these goals are articulated in the form of action lines which changed in time in terms of content and number.

[5] The Sorbonne Declaration (1998) is often mentioned as the starting point of the Bologna Process. The Sorbonne Declaration was signed by four countries' (Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom) ministers responsible for higher education who came together with the idea of solving their higher education systems' problems with the help of European level initiatives. This initiative received immediate attention of many other ministries as well as the European Commission. In this sense, the Bologna Process can be considered both as a continuation of the Sorbonne Declaration and a reaction to it. In either case, it did not start as an EU project.

[6] Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium (Flemish and French communities), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland).

Therefore, it is not easy to find a commonly defined set of priority areas in the Bologna Process. In the context of this research, the main themes of the Bologna Process are grouped into issues related to internationalisation, learning and quality.

The internationalisation of the higher education systems can be observed as a major concern of the Bologna Process from the beginning. The Bologna Declaration (1999) relates the competitiveness of European higher education to the ability of European culture to appeal to higher education systems. In this sense, attractiveness, transparency and openness of European higher education institutions to receive students and staff from abroad and to provide transnational education abroad are considered facilitating. Structural changes to enhance mobility and quality assurance measures, as well as social dimension issues are expected to increase the international competitiveness of the EHEA. The importance of networking and cooperation are also mentioned as important concerns of the Bologna Process. These concerns are mostly defined within the EHEA context. In the London Communiqué (2007), internationalisation to meet the challenges of globalisation is stated as a priority issue in the Bologna Process agenda.

Learning issues of the Bologna Process can be understood as issues on the changes in the higher education systems in relation to the comparability and compatibility of the systems. The process suggests various reforms in the structures of the study programmes, the relevance of higher education studies and to a lesser extent on the issues of access and progress in higher education. These can be followed in the initial structural reforms suggested by the process in 1999 and their shift towards requiring further reforms on the content of the study programmes.

The quality theme focuses on enhancing the level of quality and the promotion of cooperation and mutual trust in the EHEA on quality assurance. The ministers stated the importance of quality as "the basic underlying condition for trust, relevance, mobility, comparability and attractiveness in the EHEA" (Prague Communiqué 2001). The development of comparable and common mechanisms of quality assessment and ensuring their transparency and recognition can be seen in the centre of this theme.

A variety of reforms are suggested by the process in relation to these three themes. These reforms are mostly formulated in the form of action lines. Since 1999, not only the number and content of the action lines have changed and expanded, but also further reforms are formulated in other forms than action lines within the process. Therefore, in the context of this research the term 'action area', instead of action line, is opted. The reform suggestions of the Bologna Process can be grouped into the action areas of: (i) mobility, (ii) degree structures, lifelong learning, the social dimension and (iii) quality assurance. Despite it is not possible to divide these areas according to the themes in a clear-cut way; it is possible to understand (i) in relation to internationalisation, (ii) in relation to learning issues and (iii) in relation to quality.

3.2. Action Areas

The Bologna Process has suggested changes in various dimensions of higher education systems and these reforms are subject to different interpretations as well. For analytic purposes they are grouped as mobility, degree structure, lifelong learning, the social dimension and quality assurance. These action areas developed simultaneously and mostly interdependently; i.e., the achievement of one of them facilitates the achievement of others.

Yet, this would not mean a perfect coherence between these areas. The following part is composed of a brief presentation of each area.

3.2.1. Mobility

Enhancing the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff is stated as a major and indispensable objective for the creation of "a common cultural and social space" in Europe (Bologna Declaration 1999). This statement reveals two features of the initial mobility understanding in the EHEA. Mobility, as the key facilitator of creating a common area, is defined within the EHEA. In this sense, the ministers also defined the European dimension as an action line in the Bologna Declaration. It can be understood as a general concern that aims at raising awareness and knowledge on a common cultural and social space. It is supported with the development of additional courses, joint degrees, cooperation of higher education institutions and mobility programmes that have relevant European contents (Prague Communiqué 2001).

This intra-EHEA mobility understanding (mobility for the creation of a common space) has expanded overtime, especially with transnational education and global competitiveness concerns to include promoting various forms of mobility within and outside the EHEA. The ministers mentioned the external dimension concerning the position of the EHEA in the global context in the Bergen Communiqué (2005) and suggested increasing cooperation and mutual understanding between the EHEA and the rest of the world. The external dimension is included in the London Communiqué (2007) and the ministers adopted the strategy of "the European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting" to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA and to improve cooperation. To achieve these goals, the ministers set the dissemination of information and the improvement of recognition as priorities for 2009 (London Communiqué 2007).

Mobility is appreciated for giving the opportunity to students and academic and administrative staff to experience the richness and diversity of Europe and to seek the best opportunities to achieve themselves (Prague Communiqué 2001). The last General Report (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 14) summarises this double function of mobility as "apart from the economic value of creating a mobile labour force, student, early stage researcher and staff mobility also has a cultural value enhancing mutual understanding between countries and regions as well as personal fulfilment."

Mobility is mostly argued to be facilitated by similar degree structures, the recognition of credits and qualifications, openness of higher education systems to access, flexible learning paths, the cooperation between individuals and institutions and the establishment of trust through quality assurance.

3.2.2. Degree Structures

Differing degree structures increase the existing complexity of higher education systems. Having easily readable and comparable degrees is considered vital to ease this complexity. The Bologna Process suggests the development of two cycle degree structure to synchronise the degree structures, at least "at the level of programme duration" (Lourtie 2001: 15). In the Berlin Communiqué (2003) the ministers stated that each cycle should have a different orientation to meet various "individual, academic and labour market needs". Accordingly, the first cycle shall have higher labour market orientation and increase the employability of graduates. In their Berlin meeting (2003), the ministers included the doctoral level as the third cycle. In this meeting, the ministers also drew attention to the importance of the linkage

between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA) in enhancing the quality and competitiveness of the EHEA. Linking the EHEA and the ERA is recommended as a way of strengthening the basis of a Europe of Knowledge through research and research training in addition to teaching (Berlin Communiqué 2003).

The restructuring of degrees and programmes are essential for the promotion of mobility and for the cooperation in quality assurance. The main tools in restructuring degrees and programmes can be listed as the adoption of the two/three cycle degree structure, curricular reform and modularisation and recognition tools.

3.2.3. Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is mentioned as a new action line in the Prague Communiqué (2001). Lifelong learning is considered necessary to attune to the changing conditions of the knowledge-based society and economy of Europe. Lifelong learning focuses on ensuring continuous education opportunities to extent knowledge, obtain new skills and promote personal growth (Leuven Communiqué 2009, Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 26, Bologna Secretariat 2009: 20). This focus is mostly related to demographic changes, especially in western and northern European countries. To wit, the ageing societies together with rapid technological changes require updating the knowledge and skills of people continuously. In addition to this, lifelong learning aims at widening access, especially to non-traditional students, e.g., adult students, applicants with in-/non-formal qualifications or applicants with employment. This aim of lifelong learning largely bases on the recognition of prior learning (cf. Berlin Communiqué 2003). Its strong emphasis on widening access and ensuring lifelong learning opportunities for all relates to achieving social cohesion as well. In this sense, it has many commonalities with the social dimension. Recognition tools, e.g., the Diploma Supplement, the ECTS and qualifications frameworks, and flexible learning paths can be basic means in relation to lifelong learning.

3.2.4. The Social Dimension

The social dimension is stated for the first time in the Prague Communiqué in 2001. The social dimension is initially mentioned as a balancing element to decrease social and gender inequalities and to increase social cohesion and competitiveness (Berlin Communiqué 2003). In 2005, it is related to ensuring equal access to higher education and the provision of "appropriate conditions for students" to complete their studies without a hindrance due to social and economic conditions. Finally, in 2007, the ministers related it to ensuring the reflection of the diversity of the population to "the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels" (London Communiqué 2007).

Various Bologna Process documents continuously confirmed the importance of the social dimension for the competitiveness and attractiveness of the EHEA by supporting the personal development of students contributing to the knowledge based economy and to the whole society as active, aware, social human beings. In this sense, it is expected to support the employability goal as well. However, the social dimension lacked any systematic approach beyond that and as such creates the theme of this research. Since the next chapter is completely devoted to the social dimension, at this point, it is not analysed further.

3.2.5. Quality Assurance

Transparency and recognition of national quality assurance systems are considered important to advance cooperation in the EHEA and to make them understandable by higher education institutions and employers (Prague Communiqué 2001). Cooperation and

transparency demands require a certain level of standardisation in the quality assurance systems. In this process, the Bologna Process emphasises institutional autonomy and designates higher education institutions as the primary responsible units of quality assurance within the framework determined by national quality assurance systems (Berlin Communiqué 2003). To adopt an outcome based approach in developing a quality assurance system is also recommended. This approach can be considered useful for avoiding conflicts due to attempts to standardise national quality assurance systems and at the same time creating a commonality through facilitating the recognition of quality assurance systems and ensuring "shared criteria and methodologies". In the Berlin Communiqué, the ministers also called for the preparation of a guideline for quality assurance in the EHEA and in the Bergen ministerial meeting (2005) the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) in the EHEA is adopted. In their London meeting (2007), the ministers welcomed the establishment of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education to further transparency and trust. The register is formed by the EUA, the ENQA, the EURASHE and ESIB (the E4 Group) and works to enhance international cooperation and to share good practices. The register is operative since 2008.

The Leuven Communiqué (2009) suggests the use of the ESG in the governance of transnational education as well. The development of quality assurance systems and ensuring their cooperation require the extensive use of recognition tools as well as comparable degree structures.

3.3. Means

During the development of the Bologna Process, several policy means are introduced to achieve necessary changes in the above mentioned action areas. In the context of this research, these policy means are listed in relation to the two-cycle degree structure, curriculum, mobility, recognition, flexible learning paths, student services and quality assessment. The policy means are interdependent and it is not possible to strictly define them under specific action areas. In most of the cases, one policy means functions for more than one action area. For instance recognition tools are essential for all areas. In this sense, the following grouping does not follow the grouping of the action areas.

Another commonality of the means regards common guiding principles, i.e., the promotion of transparency, comparability and compatibility. In addition to this, ensuring employability and promoting student-centred learning appear as important policy concerns in the documents. Ensuring employability of graduates is mentioned in all ministerial declarations and communiqués. In the 2009 General Report (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 9) employability is defined as "the empowerment of the individual student to seize opportunities on the labour market, i.e., to gain initial meaningful employment or to become self employed, to maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the labour market". In this context, employability refers to the acquisition of key generic skills, as well as keeping them updated. The difference between employment and employability shall be highlighted as this point. Employability, as a condition, shifts the responsibility from state to individuals to achieve themselves and be able to find a job. In this process, higher education is charged with making students "fit to be employed" (Neave 2002: 190). Recently, student-centred learning and the learning outcomes based approach have also started to be mentioned. In their London meeting (2007), the ministers stated their support for "a move towards a student-centred higher education and away from teacher driven provision". Student-centred learning is fully taken into the process in the Leuven Communiqué (2009) as a way to empower

"individual learners, new approaches to teaching and learning, effective support and guidance structures and a curriculum focused more clearly on the learner in all three cycles". Learning outcomes are considered "at the heart of the paradigm shift from teacher to student-centred learning" (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 15). The use of learning outcomes as the basic identifying unit can be considered as an operationalisation of the student-centred learning paradigm. The learning outcomes based approach places the emphasis in higher education onto the outputs rather than the inputs. The main idea is providing detailed and explicit statements on what students are expected to know (knowledge) & gain (skills and competences), understand and be able to do in the end of their learning process. The 2009 Stocktaking Report and the 2009 General Report (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 20) highlight the importance of student-centred learning and the learning outcomes based approach as cross-cutting issues in "the development of national qualifications frameworks integrating the three-cycle degree system; credit transfer and accumulation; recognition of qualifications and of prior learning, and provision of flexible learning paths as part of the lifelong learning continuum" (Rauhvargers *et al*. 2009: 28).

3.3.1. Two/three Cycle Degree Structure

Reform suggestions concerning the change of degree structures require the adoption of a three cycle system. The Qualifications Framework of the EHEA (QF-EHEA) defines the length of each cycle in terms of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), i.e., typically the first cycle has 180-240 ECTS and the second cycle 90-120 ECTS. The successful completion of the first cycle is considered to provide a sufficient level of qualification for entering the second cycle and/or the labour market. The second cycle is considered to lead directly to master and/or doctorate degrees.

3.3.2. Curriculum Reform

Curriculum reform goes hand in hand with the change of degree structures. A shift to the two/three cycle degree structure requires adjustment of curricula. The compatibility of curricula, the provision of courses in widely spoken languages and the availability of language courses are also vital facilitators of mobility. One other strong emphasis in the redesign of curricula is the ability of new curricula to foster the acquisition of key skills and competences needed to find employment in changing economies, in other words being labour market relevant (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 10). While earlier communiqués emphasise only labour market orientation in reforming the curricula, the London Communiqué includes further studies, too. Courses are recommended to be redefined based on learning outcomes and taking student-centred learning into account (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 15). Modularisation, which can be understood as "breaking programmes down into smaller units" and the availability of elective courses within the curricula are also mentioned to support the flexibility of studies (CHEPS, ECOTEC & INCHER 2010: 20).

3.3.3. Mobility Means

Since the end of the 1980s, the EU mobility programmes (ERASMUS, SOCRATES, ERASMUS-Mundus) have been promoting staff and student mobility. In the Bologna Process context, the ministers acknowledged the support of these programmes to the promotion of mobility. Secondly, projects such as the "Joint Master's Project" and "Joint Degrees in Europe" shall be mentioned. In the Joint Master's Project, at least three universities cooperate to establish a master's programme. Participating universities prepare an integrated course programme and ensure full recognition (Zgaga 2003: 30). Joint degrees are awarded by more than one higher education institution in completion of a programme offered by two or more

higher education institutions or other institutions with integrated curricula and substantial amount of study period abroad. Joint degree programmes also support intra-EHEA mobility (Bologna Secretariat 2005).

Another means in relation to mobility is the removal of obstacles and portability of financial support. The ministers mentioned the need to act on the obstacles for mobility of students and staff, such as visa regulations and residence and work permits, the recognition of study periods, insufficient financial incentives and inflexible pension (Bergen Communiqué 2005). The ministers suggested ensuring the portability of national loans and grants in order to improve student mobility (Berlin Communiqué 2003).

3.3.4. Recognition Tools

The improvement of recognition is a central element for all action areas of the Bologna Process, i.e., achieving comparable and compatible degree structures, enhancing mobility both between higher education institutions and between cycles, the establishment of a quality assurance system at the European level, the improvement of lifelong learning and the social dimension. Furthermore, the recognition of higher education qualifications by labour market is argued to promote the employability of graduates and the wider recognition of the EHEA degrees to promote the competitiveness of higher education institutions. All participating countries are encouraged to utilise national and European level legislative tools to enhance the "recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning" (London Communiqué 2007).

Trust and flexibility are considered as two basic requirements of recognition. Clear statement and transparency of qualifications based on learning outcomes of a programme, credit system and quality assurance facilitate recognition. The ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the Diploma Supplement, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), qualifications frameworks, the recognition of joint degrees and the promotion of ENIC/NARIC networks can be mentioned as relevant means.

3.3.4.1. The Lisbon Recognition Convention

The Lisbon Recognition Convention was issued by the Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES in 1997 and is the only legally binding document of the Bologna Process. In the Berlin meeting, the ministers stated the recognition of periods of study and degrees as a priority and called all Bologna Process countries to ratify and implement the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The convention disclaims any discrimination of qualifications based on the issuing country and of holders based on gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political opinion or national, ethnic or social origin and encourages the provision of necessary information by each country on study programmes, higher education systems and recognition of qualifications (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 33).

3.3.4.2. The Diploma Supplement

The Diploma Supplement is a document showing the qualifications of a degree in an easily understandable way. It improves transparency and facilitates the recognition of academic and professional qualifications internationally (Berlin Communiqué 2003). In the Berlin ministerial meeting (2003), it was decided that every graduate will receive the Diploma Supplement automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language from 2005 onwards.

3.3.4.3. The European Credit Transfer System

Another recognition means is the use of the ECTS. Originally, the ECTS was set up by the EC within the context of the ERASMUS programme. This tool was designed to facilitate the recognition of study periods undertaken abroad. In the Bologna ministerial meeting (1999), the ministers called for the development of a credit system, the ECTS or another system compatible with it. In time, the ECTS has consolidated in the EHEA (Zgaga 2003: 49). The ECTS functions to enable the transferability and accumulation of credits gained in higher education and non-higher education contexts. The ECTS credits are defined based on student workload with a learning outcomes perspective. It is expected to support the transparency and comparability of study programmes and qualifications, as well as international curriculum development (London Communiqué 2007).

3.3.4.4. Qualifications Frameworks

Qualifications frameworks shall show "what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on the basis of a given qualification" and can encompass all qualifications in a (higher) education system (Benelux Bologna Secretariat[7]). The importance of common qualifications frameworks to improve the world-wide understandability of European higher education degrees is mentioned in the Prague Declaration (2001). In the Berlin meeting, the ministers recommended the establishment of a framework that defines qualifications in terms of "workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile" (Berlin Communiqué 2003). In line with the rest of the objectives, qualifications frameworks are required to be compatible with two (three) cycles degree structure, quality assurance system, the ECTS and to "include non-formal and informal education". (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 26).

In the Bergen meeting, the ministers adopted the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA (QF-EHEA[8]). The framework states "generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles" (Bergen Communiqué 2005). As a second step, national qualifications frameworks are required to be prepared and implemented in compliance with the QF-EHEA. The responsibility of defining qualifications frameworks rests at the national level and is expected to be compatible with the QF-EHEA. This coordination shall go through a self-certification procedure where each country certifies the compatibility of the national framework with the overarching framework and publishes details of the certification process (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 25).

3.3.4.5. ENIC/NARIC Networks

In 2001, the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) Networks are called for taking action to improve the recognition of degrees and study periods. ENIC is established by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and NARIC by the European Commission. These networks work to improve policies and practices on the recognition of qualifications and study periods as well as providing information from member countries (ENIC/NARIC Networks[9]). Nevertheless, the ENIC/NARIC networks have remained insignificant in the promotion of recognition activities (Bologna Secretariat 2005).

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[7] http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/qf/qf.asp

[8] The QF-EHEA is different from European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. The latter one is adopted by the EU in 2008 and covers all levels of education, while the former one is only for higher education. (http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/qf/qf.asp)

[9] http://www.enic-naric.net/index.aspx?s=n&r=g&d=about

3.3.5. Flexible Learning Paths

Some means are promoted in the Bologna Process context with the claim of increasing the flexibility of learning paths and hence discussed in this chapter under this title. The provision of flexible learning paths is discussed initially in relation to the two-cycle degree structures in the International Seminar on Bachelor Level Degrees (2001). Flexible learning paths are expected to decrease dropout rates and shorten study periods. Flexible learning paths are suggested to be created in connection with qualifications frameworks and to encompass the recognition of prior learning (Berlin 2003 and Bergen Communiqués 2005). In the Leuven Communiqué (2009), the inclusion of part-time studies and work-based routes in obtaining qualifications are mentioned. The use of the ECTS is encouraged in this sense. In addition to this, the Bologna Secretariat (2005: 12) encompasses e-learning and other non-classical learning and teaching forms in this context. The 2009 Stocktaking Report analyses the flexible learning paths in terms of modularisation, flexible curricula, availability of open, part-time, distance, e-learning and blended learning, as well as flexibility of entry points (Rauhvargers et al. 2009: 85).

3.3.6. Student Services

Student services are mentioned by the ministers in order to provide appropriate living and study conditions for students which shall support the completion of studies. Student services are the only means directly linked to the social dimension. They are discussed in detail in the Chapter 4.

3.3.7. Quality Tools

The "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" defines the framework of the "European standards for internal and external quality assurance and for quality assurance agencies". According to it, concerning internal quality assurance, each higher education institution should have a strategy, policy and procedures for quality assurance. This task includes ensuring periodic reviews and monitoring of the programmes; the assessment of teaching staff, the inclusion of students and other stakeholders in quality assessment processes, information gathering to support effective management and the publicity of information. External quality assurance aims at ensuring the effectiveness of internal quality assurance processes, "accreditation of programmes or institutions", providing public information and quality improvement (ENQA 2005: 14). External quality assurance agencies are expected to act in compliance with the higher education institutions' strategies but still independently and considering their own goals, they should have accountability procedures for their own accountability and shall resign themselves to a cyclical review in five years (ibid: 24). The report also suggests the registration of "recognised external quality assurance agencies" in Europe to guard quality standards against profit oriented enterprises.

3.4. Bologna Process Actors and Management

This chapter, finally, introduces the main policy actors and management structures of the Bologna Process. This section is especially important in order to understand the existence of the social dimension in the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process has a rather open and flexible management system. A variety of actors, e.g., researchers, practitioners, interest group organisations, etc. are invited to the Bologna Process events (e.g., international seminars and workshops) to communicate their views on the issue depending on their relevance to the topic. Each group of actors has different priority issues that they bring in the

Bologna Process depending on its missions and actions. The core group of actors are members and consultative members of the process. This research focuses on these actors. These policy actors come from different levels of governance and include governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental actors:

- *Members* are the 47 Bologna Process countries and the European Commission
- *Consultative members* are the BUSINESSEUROPE, the Council of Europe, the Education International Pan-European Structure (EI), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students' Union (ESU), the European University Association (EUA) and the UNESCO.

The Berlin Communiqué (2003) defines membership criteria for countries as being party to the European Cultural Convention and willing "to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education". The European Commission became the non-country full member of the process in 2001.

The European Commission is the executive organ of the European Union which monitors the proper application of treaties and decisions. The European Commission (EC) is involved in the Bologna Process since its beginning. The EC is especially interested in the areas that overlap with the EU's higher education policies, such as mobility, quality assurance and other areas that can promote the employability of graduates and support knowledge economies. It has had a growing impact on the progression of the Bologna Process with its financial capacity. The EC has sponsored key Bologna activities such as the National Teams of Bologna Promoters, seminars, conferences and information gathering activities, (e.g., the Stocktaking exercise, the EUA Trends reports, the ESU Student Survey, the EUROStudent Survey) and other research activities in relevant themes. The EC supervises the Eurydice reports.

The BUSINESSEUROPE represents the world of work in the Bologna Process (BUSINESSEUROPE website[10]). It was established with the name of the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) in 1958. It brings together 41 industrial and employers' federations from 35 countries and represents the companies' interests vis-à-vis the European institutions. Its main aims are enhancing cooperation and improving competitive industrial policy in Europe. It became a consultative member in the Bologna Process in 2005. The BUSINESSEUROPE's focus of interest in the Bologna Process context is on mobility, quality assurance and lifelong learning are the priority action areas (cf. UNICE 2003, 2004 and 2006).

The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1949. It has 47 European countries as its members and seeks to promote democratic principles, human rights and rule of law throughout Europe. The Council of Europe has been involved in the Bologna Process since 2001. It takes active part in the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) and in many of its working groups. The main work of the Council of Europe in the Bologna Process focuses on qualifications frameworks and higher education as a public responsibility. In this sense, it is related to the social dimension.

The EI is an international organisation representing academics, university and research personnel working in the higher education and research sector. The organisation works to

[10] http://www.businesseurope.eu/content/Default.asp?PageID=571

defend academic freedom, intellectual property rights and rights of educational personnel. In addition to this, it pays attention to higher education's inclusion in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)[11] and other trade agreements. It became a consultative member of the Bologna Process in 2005. The EI focuses on mobility, quality assurance and the social dimension in the Bologna Process context (EI website[12]).

The EURASHE is an international representative of professional higher education institutions, e.g., polytechnics, colleges, university of applied sciences, etc. It was founded in 1990. The EURASHE works to defend the interests of the professionally oriented higher education institutions and to enhance quality in this sector in Europe. It is involved in the Bologna Process since 2001. The EURASHE mostly focuses on degree structure, quality assurance and lifelong learning action areas of the Bologna Process (EURASHE website[13]).

The ENQA works to promote cooperation in the field of quality assurance in Europe. It was established as the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in 2000. Its members are composed of quality assurance agencies in the EHEA. The ENQA plays a key role in the development of a quality assurance system in Europe. It works as a network for the dissemination of information and sharing practices in quality assurance. The ENQA is a consultative member in the Bologna Process since 2005. Its activities are exclusively on quality assurance.

The ESU - previously ESIB - is an umbrella organisation of 45 national unions of students from 38 countries. The ESU works to represent the interests of students at the European level. The ESU was invited as an observer to the Bologna Process in 2001 and in 2005 it became a consultative member. Since then it has contributed to the development of the process by taking active part in all activity areas of the BFUG. In addition to this, the ESU prepares the Bologna With Students Eyes reports. The main focus of action for the ESU in the Bologna Process context includes the social dimension, quality assurance and mobility.

The EUA is a representative organisation for universities. The EUA is established in 2001 as a result of a merger of the Association of the European Universities and the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences. It has around 850 members from 47 countries composed of universities, national rectors' conferences and associations and networks of higher education institutions. It has been involved in the Bologna Process since its beginning. It takes part in the Bologna Process during the biannual meetings, and actively participates in the BFUG and the working groups. In addition to this, the EUA prepares the Trends reports. The work of the EUA in the Bologna Process context focus on degree structures, mobility and quality assurance.

UNESCO is an intergovernmental organisation supporting cooperation. UNESCO-CEPES is one of its branches specialised on higher education. UNESCO-CEPES started to work in 1972 to promote cooperation and disseminate information on higher education with a special focus on the needs of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe. UNESCO-CEPES became a consultative member of the Bologna Process in 2003. It served as a BFUG member in 2003-2009. Since 2010, the Division of Higher Education of UNESCO is carrying out this

[11] The GATS is a treaty of the World Trade Organisation aiming at the promotion of global free trade. Higher education became a part of the GATS in the 1994 round which increased the market orientation in higher education policies (Reichert & Tauch 2003: 42).

[12] http://www.ei-ie.org/en/websections/content_detail/3266

[13] http://www.eurashe.eu/RunScript.asp?page=123&p=ASP\Pg123.asp

function. Its activities in this context relate to mobility and quality assurance. (http://www.cepes.ro/themes/policy_reform/default.htm)

3.4.1. Management Structure

The Bologna Process started as an intergovernmental initiative and continued with strong stakeholder involvement. This basic feature brought a very complex management structure to the Bologna Process. Policy actors from various backgrounds with various and possibly conflicting interests come together on this European level policy making platform. During the last decade, these actors mostly worked based on mutual trust and cooperation while trying to promote the issues and interests that they brought along. The Bologna Process has neither legally binding documents (except the Lisbon Recognition Convention), nor an elected governing body. The BFUG, the BFUG Board and the BFUG Secretariat are the main governing bodies in the Bologna Process.

The **BFUG** is composed of the representatives of all members and consultative members. Until July 2010 the BFUG is chaired by the EU Presidency, since then it is co-chaired by the EU Presidency and a non-EU country[14]. The vice chair is the host of the next ministerial conference. The chair of the BFUG rotates every six months. The BFUG is responsible for the overall steering of the process; it decides on a work plan, which it adopts in the end of each ministerial meeting for the next two years. The work plan consists of working groups, seminars and networks. The work of the BFUG substructures is supported by the Secretariat through minutes and agendas. The **Board**[15] is composed of outgoing, present and incoming chairs, vice-chairs, and the representatives of the European Commission, Council of Europe, the EUA, the ESU and the EURASHE. The Board oversees BFUG activities and works to ensure the efficient management of the process and its continuity (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 55). The **Secretariat** is provided by the host country[16] of the next ministerial meeting and has the mandate for two years. "The Secretariat prepares draft agendas, draft reports, notes and minutes and carries out the practical preparation for meetings as requested by the Chairs. It is also at the disposal of the Chair to assist it in its tasks of finding compromise solutions, coordinating work and summing up situations" (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 25). The Secretariat is also responsible of providing up-to-date and reliable information and preparing the upcoming ministerial conferences (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 26).

The process has very strong stakeholder involvement. The ministers from the beginning welcomed the active participation of higher education institutions and students, as well as other stakeholders in the ministerial meetings and the follow-up activities. This structure "creates a sense of collective ownership among ministers (and ministries) as well as higher education institutions, students and staff based on informal cooperation and partnership" (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 25). This ownership feeling is claimed to foster a fruitful policy formulation and implementation environment.

Another feature of its management structure is informal and flexible communication among the actors. The ministers meet every two years to evaluate the progress on the implementation of reforms, decide on the goals and work plan of the process. Between the biannual meetings, the follow-up structure works through intense, scheduled meetings,

[14] Non-EU countries are designated according to the alphabetical order.

[15]The Board composition was changed in 2010. Previously, there were three elected country representatives instead of the outgoing, present and incoming chairs.

[16] The host is elected by the BFUG members.

seminar and workshops. Many actors stated to appreciate the communication in the follow-up structures for "providing excellent networking possibilities and an effective setting for the exchange of information (communication is increasingly bilateral, outside official meetings)" (CHEPS, ECOTEC & INCHER 2010: 96).

Last but not least is its steering model. The decisions made at the European level by a group of national, intergovernmental and non-governmental actors are expected to be translated into actions by the national or regional level depending on the countries higher education regulations and need to be carried out by higher education institutions. This complex structure has similarities with the open method of coordination of the European Commission. Accordingly, the idea is not to operate with classical methods of directives and regulations. Instead, "governments themselves agree to peer-review and benchmarking of relevant policy areas" (Corbett 2005:5). As a result they are expected to learn from best practices. So the steps of policy making would be defining goals, developing benchmarks to evaluate these goals and then each country would develop its own action plans for implementation. In the Bologna Process the ministers set their own agenda and evaluate their practices with stocktaking exercises. The countries are expected to provide national reports every two years. This report is based on a questionnaire prepared by the Stocktaking working group of the Bologna Process. Then a cumulative report is prepared, in which countries are evaluated by green, yellow and red colours.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter briefly introduced the main themes, action areas, means and actors and management structure of the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process continues to evolve. This leads to various interpretations of the Bologna Process depending on the objectives and the background of authors. Within the context of this research, the Bologna Process is grouped in terms of its main themes (internationalisation, learning issues and quality), action areas (mobility, degree structures, lifelong learning, social dimension and quality assurance) and the main policy means (two cycle degree structure, curriculum reform, mobility tools, recognition tools, flexible learning paths, student services and quality assessment tools) to act within them. These areas and means are introduced in order to contextualise the social dimension as the main research theme of this dissertation without attempting an exhaustive discussion on the Bologna Process itself. The social dimension is placed within the learning issues theme and following chapter discusses its features and relations with the above described areas and means of the Bologna Process in detail.

4. The Social Dimension of the Bologna Process

Considering higher education as an essential element in advancement of individuals and societies, the social dimension has potential to promote the decency of higher education studies by being the action area focusing on equity and wellbeing concepts in the Bologna Process context. So far, it has been "a moving target" which has not settled with its features. This chapter explores the main features of the social dimension by looking at how different policy actors understand and define it in different contexts and shows patterns through systematic comparison of these features. Finally, the chapter discusses the relation of the social dimension with the other action areas. By this means, the chapter answers two of the research questions:

1. **What does the social dimension of the Bologna Process mean according to the Bologna Process actors? Are there different understandings and if so, how do they differ?**
   1.1. What is the role, status and monitoring of the social dimension in the Bologna Process?
   1.2. What are the strategic goals of the social dimension?
   1.3. What are the operational goals of the social dimension?
   1.4. What are the means of these goals of the social dimension?
2. **What is the relationship of the social dimension with the rest of the Bologna Process?**
   2.1. Is there a relationship at all?
   2.2. Are there common or conflicting elements between the social dimension and the other action areas of the Bologna Process?

The chapter initially examines the definitions of the social dimension in the ministerial declarations and communiqués in 1999-2010. Since these are the strategic documents of the Bologna Process which are produced with the involvement of all members and expected to be communicated to national and institutional levels, the understanding outlined in these documents is taken as the reference point for the analysis. The ministerial documents, however, are in the form of broad goal formulations and do not give detailed explanations of the action areas. Therefore, the reports of the Bologna Secretariat, the BFUG-Working Groups and international Bologna seminars are analysed as additional official documents. Secondly, in order to explore the different understandings of the social dimension according to the main policy actors, the official policy papers, statements and reports, as well as the interviews with these actors are analysed. Within the context of this research, the main policy actors of the Bologna Process are considered as the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, the European Students' Union (ESU), the Education International Pan-European Structure, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, the BUSINESSEUROPE and the European University Association (EUA) (Please see Chapter 3 for more information on these actors). Based on systematic analysis, the chapter shows the development of the social dimension by looking at its status, role and follow-up processes and defines it with respect to its strategic goals, operational goals and means to achieve them. Finally, it locates the social dimension in the Bologna Process by looking at the relationships with other action areas and hence discusses the

(un)embeddedness of the social dimension in the Bologna Process. The analysis is done with a chronological in order to show the development in time.

4.1. The Development of the Social Dimension (1999-2010)

The social dimension entered the Bologna Process agenda in 2001 as an ambiguous item. Until the Bergen meeting (2005), many issues of the social dimension are mentioned under other action areas, e.g., mobility, lifelong learning and degree structures. The social dimension appeared in the documents as a loosely connected item. In time, it became connected as it was attributed to a certain status, role and follow-up procedures. Table 4.1 illustrates this development.

Table 4.1 The Development of the Social Dimension in the Ministerial Documents

	Prague 2001	**Berlin 2003**	**Bergen 2005**	**London 2007**	**Leuven 2009**	**Budapest 2010**
Status	appeared	affirmed	constituent element			-
Role	-	balancing role	balancing and supporting role			
Follow-Up	to be explored	call for data collection	call for data and national strategies	systematic follow-up suggestions		-

Source: Extracted from the ministerial communiqués and declarations (2001-2010)

In analysing the development of the social dimension, the international Bologna Process seminars on the social dimension form the path (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 The International Bologna Process Seminars on the Social Dimension (1999-2010)

Date	**Place**	**Name of the Seminar**
February 2003	Athens, Greece	Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area
June 2003	Oslo, Norway	Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education
January 2005	Paris, France	The Social Dimension of the EHEA and World-wide Competition
November 2008	Budapest, Hungary	Equality in a Knowledge Based Society: How to Widen Opportunities?

4.1.1. 1999-2001

The Bologna Declaration does not have any reference to the social dimension or its related elements. The ministers' first meeting after the Bologna meeting was in Helsinki in November 1999, where the ministers decided to have three[17] international seminars[18]. The

[17] The seminars are "Credit Accumulation and Transfer Systems", Portugal, November 2000; "Bachelor-Level Degrees", Finland, February 2001; "Transnational Education", Sweden, March 2001 (Lourtie 2001).

2001 General Report analyses the 1999-2001 events, including these seminars. The report mentions higher education goals beyond "international competitiveness, mobility and employability" (Lourtie 2001: ii) and describes higher education as not only about feeding economy with needed labour force, "but also a means to personal, social and cultural development" (Lourtie 2001: 13). These statements can be considered as signs for general concerns on the social dimension relevant issues.

4.1.2. 2001-2003

In the Prague Communiqué (2001), the ministers mentioned the social dimension for the first time as a response to ESU's call by affirming that there is a need "to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna process" under the heading "Higher education institutions and students". The ministers also called for the exploration of "the social dimension, with specific attention to obstacles to mobility" under the heading "promotion of mobility".

In 2001-2003 international seminars were organised in two major groups of "a complex of issues on *degree structures and qualifications*" and "the *social dimension of higher education*". The second group included "the social dimension of the Bologna Process, with special attention to obstacles of mobility and student involvement; and lifelong learning in higher education" (Zgaga 2003: 51). Such a categorisation suggests a new position to the social dimension, as can be seen in the 2003 General Report. In the 2003 General Report, the social dimension is interpreted as an overarching element covering social aspects of all Bologna Process reforms, e.g., the social dimension of the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement. The 2003 General Report, like the 2001 General Report, reminds the importance of social issues, i.e., "social dimensions and lifelong perspectives in higher education" and social cohesion within the Bologna Process (Zgaga 2003: 11–2). In the conclusions of the "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" international Bologna seminar (2003) the social dimension is explained with a balancing role by emphasising the social characteristics of the EHEA. It is expected to "counterbalance the need for competitiveness" and eventually support the competitiveness of it (Zgaga 2003: 79).

In 2001-2003[19], out of ten official Bologna-Follow-Up Seminars two tackled the social dimension (Zgaga 2003). "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" was organised by the Hellenic Republic Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs and had a large ESU participation. The seminar participants called for the follow-up of the social dimension, including further research which would pay more attention to different elements of the social dimension (Zgaga 2003: 17). In addition to this,

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[18] It shall be mentioned that in this period, the international seminars were not structured and assigned to certain themes yet. In the consecutive follow-up periods they became more structured.

[19] Quality Assurance and Accreditation: "Working on the European Dimension of Quality", Amsterdam, March 2002. Recognition Issues and the Use of Credits: "Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process", Lisbon, April 2002; "Credit Transfer and Accumulation – the Challenge for Institutions and Students", Zürich, October 2002. Development of Joint Degrees: "Seminar on Joint Degrees within the Framework of the Bologna Process", Stockholm, May 2002; "Integrated Programmes – Implications and Prospects", Mantova, April 2003. Degree and Qualification Structure: "International Seminar on Master-level Degrees", Helsinki, March 2003; "Qualification Structures in Higher Education in Europe", Copenhagen, March 2003. Social Dimensions of the Bologna Process: "Seminar on the Social Dimensions of the Higher Education Area", Athens, February 2003; "Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education", Oslo, June 2003. Lifelong Learning: "Recognition and Credit Systems in the Context of Lifelong Learning", Prague, June 2003 (Zgaga 2003).

the participants made concrete suggestions for further development of the social dimension as a policy. They recommended the development of "social student policy" at the European and national level and the perception of the social dimension as an action line like others (Neetens 2003: 3-4). They also drew attention to the fact that it is neither possible nor needed to develop a common European student services framework, as student services show huge diversity in each country. Instead, they suggested the promotion of cooperation based on common goals and the development of comparable policy criteria, like it has been done for quality assurance. In this sense, the assignment of tasks to the European Council for Student Affairs (ECStA)[20], similar to the task assignment to the ENQA for quality assurance, was recommended (Neetens 2003: 4). The participants also pointed to the need for comparative and analytical qualitative information on different student services and "best practices in access and social support policies" (Neetens 2003: 4). In accordance with these arguments, the participants provided a long list of suggestions to be included in the Berlin Communiqué, of which only one was included. The second seminar listed in relation to the social dimension is "Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education". The situation of the student participation in the social dimension has been unsteady and hence analysed separately (please see 4.5.2).

4.1.3. 2003-2005

In the Berlin Communiqué (2003) "the importance of the social dimension of the Bologna Process" is mentioned in the preamble. Furthermore, the ministers mentioned its balancing role against the other action lines' emphasis on increasing competitiveness. "The need for more comparable data on the social and economic situation of students", as was mentioned by the international seminar participants, is acknowledged by the ministers. This acknowledgement is important for enabling the development of the social dimension as an action area by promoting information provision on it.

The participants of the "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-Wide Competition" seminar (2005) emphasised the social dimension's importance as a European value and its balancing role. Accordingly, the achievement of the social dimension goals and ensuring sustainable economic development go hand in hand. Therefore, there should be a balanced emphasis on both of them (Statsna 2005: 1). The 2005 General Report also mentions the social dimension's role in the "creation of a coherent, balanced and competitive European Higher Education Area" (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 21). In line with the 2003 General Report, the 2005 General Report perceives "the social dimension "as an overarching or transversal action line" in addition to the other ten[21] (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 9). However, the report does not include it as the 11th action line. In this period, the social dimension is included as an underlying principle of the Bologna Process in the guideline for joining the Bologna Process (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 40). The

[20] ECStA was founded in 1999. It is an umbrella organisation that works to promote student services in European higher education institutions. It has not taken any significant action in the Bologna Process context. More information can be found at http://www.ecsta.org/en/about-us/

[21] 1) Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees; 2) Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles; 3) Establishment of a system of credits; 4) Promotion of mobility; 5) Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance; 6) Promotion of the European dimension in higher education; 7) Lifelong learning; 8) Higher education institutions and students; 9) Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area; 10) Doctoral studies and the synergy between the EHEA and the ERA.

2005 General Report also mentioned it as "a constituent part of the EHEA and a necessary condition for its attractiveness and competitiveness" (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 42).

There were 14 official Bologna Seminars[22] in 2003-2005, two of them focused on the social dimension. The "Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research" seminar is organised by the Council of Europe and discussed the social dimension elements in relation to public responsibility (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 14). The "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-wide Competition" was organised by the French Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research in cooperation with the ESU. Considering the follow-up, the participants of the "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-Wide Competition" seminar recommended an analytical survey focusing "on the social and economic situation of students, including obstacles to access and mobility and taking into account the lifelong learning objectives" (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 21). They also mentioned the need to share best practices in including underrepresented groups in higher education and called international organisations such as the ESU, the EUA, the ENQA and the EURASHE to take action (Stastna 2005: 5). The participants also mentioned the necessity to take a political approach in order to promote the social dimension and called the BFUG to make the social dimension a priority area for 2005-2007 and beyond (Statsna 2005: 4-5). In 2005, the Working Group on Stocktaking recommended the establishment of a working group "to prepare a report on the issues associated with equitable access" and to develop "benchmarks to measure action in this area" (BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking 2005: 48).

4.1.4. 2005-2007

In the Bergen meeting (2005), the ministers stated that the social dimension is "a constituent part of the EHEA and a necessary condition for its attractiveness and competitiveness" and demanded social dimension's inclusion in future stocktaking; however, not as a priority area. In the Bergen Communiqué (2005), the social dimension has become a separate title, rather than a sub-issue in other action areas.

There were totally seven official Bologna Seminars[23] in 2005-2007 and none of them focused on the social dimension. In this follow-up period, the Bologna Working Group on Social

[22] "Joint Degrees – Further Development", Stockholm, May 2004; "Bologna and the Challenges of E-learning and Distance Education", Ghent, June 2004; "Using Learning Outcomes", Edinburgh, July 2004; "Assessment and Accreditation in the European Framework", Santander, July 2004; "Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research", Strasbourg, September 2004; "Designing Policies for Mobile Students", Noordwijk, October 2004; "The Employability and its Links to the Objectives of the Bologna Process", Bled, October 2004; "New Generations of Policy Documents and Laws for HE", Warsaw, November 2004; "Bachelor's Degree: What Is It?", St. Petersburg, November 2004; "Improving the Recognition System of Degrees and Study Credit Points", Riga, December 2004; "The Framework of Qualifications of the EHEA", Copenhagen, January 2005; "The Social Dimension of the EHEA and World-wide Competition", Paris, January 2005; "Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society", Salzburg, February 2005; "Cooperation between Accreditation Committees/Agencies", Warsaw, February 2005 (Bologna Secretariat 2005).

[23] "The Cultural Heritage and Academic Values of the European University and the Attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area", the Vatican, April 2006; "Putting European Higher Education Area on the Map: Developing Strategies for Attractiveness", Athens, June 2006; "Enhancing European Employability", Swansea, July 2006; "Joint Degrees – A Hallmark of the European Higher Education Area?", Berlin, September 2006; "Looking out: Bologna in a Global Setting", Oslo, September 2006;

Dimension and Data on the Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries (BFUG-WG)[24] was formed. The BFUG-WG produced "Recommendations from the Working Group on Social Dimension and Data on the Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries" in 2007. The BFUG-WG analysed the social dimension through the prism of mobility in two sections, i.e., the "social dimension in the home country of the student" and "the social dimension of mobility", as it was requested by the ministers in Bergen. The recommendations prepared by the BFUG-WG are the most comprehensive work at the Bologna level focusing on the social dimension. The BFUG-WG referred to the balancing role of the social dimension by ensuring equal access opportunities to personal development and sustainable employment, promoting societal benefits, i.e., the democratisation of societies, ensuring sustainable economic growth and increasing attractiveness (BFUG-WG 2007: 12). The 2007 Stocktaking Report also touched upon the balancing role of the social dimension in achieving "social and economic cohesion" in its conclusions (BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking 2007:41). The BFUG-WG report also points to the ambiguity of the social dimension in the ministerial documents with respect to implementations (BFUG-WG 2007: 14).

The BFUG-WG suggested a path for the development of the social dimension. The first recommendation is the development of national strategies including action plans with a general approach and the inclusion of these strategies in the 2009 Stocktaking exercise. The exercise is reasoned with the differences among countries and aims at monitoring the development of each country according to their own goals. The second recommendation is on data collection. The working group pointed to the lack of comparable and reliable data on the social dimension issues. It suggested to higher education institutions to undertake surveys and the Eurostat and EUROStudent to develop systematic, comparable data on participative equity and employability under BFUG supervision (BFUG-WG 2007: 44). Supporting this point, the 2007 Stocktaking Report recommended setting clear goals and targets for the social dimension at the Bologna Process level (BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking 2007:54). This proposition, together with the BFUG-WG's recommendations, is of vital importance for the development of the social dimension, as it is expected to provide reliable data from all participating countries that can be used to identify obstacles and hence inform future policy making in this area.

4.1.5. 2007-2010

In their London meeting (2007), following the suggestions of the working groups, the ministers called for the development of national strategies and policies with action plans and measures and the participation of all national level stakeholders in this work. Moreover, the Eurostat and EUROStudent were asked "to develop comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension [...] in all Bologna countries" (London Communiqué 2007).

The participants of the "Equality in a Knowledge-based Society: How to Widen Opportunities?" (2008) seminar reemphasised the importance of the social dimension with its balancing/supporting role to achieve a genuine EHEA. They stated that in order to

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"New Challenges in Recognition", Riga, January 2007; "Making Bologna a Reality: Mobility of Staff and Students", London, February 2007 (Bologna Secretariat 2007).

[24] The BFUG-WG was chaired by Sweden and composed of representatives from ESU, EUA, EI, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Russia and the United Kingdom.

achieve a competitive economy, it is necessary to have high quality human resources. The social dimension is considered to be good for increasing the number of highly qualified people and the continuous update of their skills and knowledge. Accordingly, by promoting inclusive higher education the social dimension both balances the economic emphasis and enhances competitiveness (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 12). The 2009 General Report also mentions the balancer role of the social dimension, i.e., contributing to the personal development and the development of the knowledge economy of Europe (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 8). A nuance in the balancing role shall be highlighted at this point. While previously it was balancing the social role and characteristics of higher education against the economic ones, since 2007, it also includes balancing the personal contribution versus the societal contribution. The 2009 General Report explains this role's importance with respect to the challenges of the ageing societies of Europe, technological changes and global competition. The social dimension, together with lifelong learning, is expected to function for "remaining creative and innovative in a knowledge society", ensuring sustainable labour force and meeting the changing demands of the "new" student body which will be older and more engaged with family and employment requirements (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 20).

The seminar participants also stated the social dimension's transversal character which makes it necessary "to permeate every single component of the Bologna Process" (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 12). Accordingly, all reform suggestions of the Bologna Process should take the social dimension into account and the social dimension should receive higher priority in the Bologna Process. The 2009 General Report also states the overarching character of the social dimension. Similar to the 2001 and 2003 General Reports, the 2009 General Report groups the issues of the Bologna Process into two: action lines with clearly defined operational outcomes (i.e., degree structure and qualifications frameworks, quality assurance and recognition) and policy areas without clearly defined regulatory frameworks (i.e., "the social dimension, employability, lifelong learning, mobility and the Bologna Process in its global dimension") (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 5-8).

For the 2007-2009 Stocktaking exercise, the social dimension is specified as a priority area for the first and only time. The 2009 Stocktaking Report affirms its importance and has a special chapter on the "Analysis of the National Strategies on the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process", prepared by the Social Dimension Coordination Group.

As for the follow-up of the social dimension, the key issues have been collecting data and the development of national plans and strategies. The importance of collecting and developing sound data and empirical evidences and their absence as a problem are mentioned in order to improve monitoring and support policy making on the social dimension (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 5, Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 138-140, Bologna Secretariat 2009: 28). There were 18 official Bologna Seminars[25] in 2007-2009 and one of them was on the social dimension. The

[25] "Forum on Qualifications Frameworks", Strasbourg, October 2007; "Learning Outcomes Based Higher Education: the Scottish Experience", Edinburg, February 2008; "Universities and Lifelong Learning", Brdo, March 2008; "ECTS Based on Learning Outcomes and Student Workload", Moscow, April 2008; "Seminar on Bologna Beyond 2010", Ghent, May 2008; "Fostering Student Mobility: Next Steps? Involving Stakeholders for an Improved Mobility Inside the EHEA", Brussels, May 2008; "Staff Mobility and Pension Arrangements", Berlin, June 2008; "Development of a Common Understanding of Learning Outcomes and ECTS", Porto, June 2008; "Quality Assurance in Higher Education", Strasbourg, September 2008, "Seminar on Third Cycle Degrees", Helsinki, September - October 2008; "EI/ESU Mobility Conference", Lille, October 2008; "Europe, an Area of Student Mobility", Nancy,

seminar on "Equality in a Knowledge-based Society: How to Widen Opportunities?" was organised by the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture. Regarding national strategies, the participants stated that countries should develop national action plans and strategies in cooperation with stakeholders (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 12). In addition to this, the participants suggested the development of relevant indicators and a monitoring system to measure the impact of current policies and the intensification of the cooperation between secondary and higher education for the achievement of the social dimension goals (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 12-13). The seminar participants also recommended the development of an information campaign on the social dimension to raise knowledge about it among "students, teaching staff and higher education managers" (ibid.). The 2009 General Report also recommends each country to set measurable targets and monitoring systems (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 28). The 2009 Stocktaking Report has a section on the social dimension which was prepared based on the national reports submitted for the 2007-2009 period. For the social dimension section the countries were asked to report on their underrepresented groups and plans to address their problems.

The Leuven Communiqué (2009) also recommends setting measurable targets at the national level and improving data collection. The BFUG is again asked to define indicators in order to measure and monitor the social dimension. The Eurostat, the EUROStudent and the Eurydice were assigned to collect data.

The Budapest-Vienna Declaration (2010) affirms the role of the social dimension in supporting social and economic development.

> "We are convinced that higher education is a major driver for social and economic development and for innovation in an increasingly knowledge-driven world. We shall therefore increase our efforts on the social dimension."

4.1.6. Conclusion

As could be followed from the Bologna documents chronologically, the social dimension has had a cumulative progression[26] on its way from an element to be explored to a constituent one. In addition to this, the social dimension is mostly mentioned as an overarching action line, transversal policy area or as a principle of the Bologna Process. The role of the social dimension has also changed in time, from a balancing role to a supporting role in making the EHEA more attractive and competitive. The social dimension was initially attributed to the role of achieving the social goals of higher education in order to balance *against* the economic goals. This balancing role was defined in relation to the overemphasis on international competitiveness, the function of higher education in knowledge economies and employment and as a response to students who pointed that the social role of higher education is missing in the Bologna Process context. After 2007, the balancing role started to be interpreted as a supporting role. The role of the social dimension came to be seen as balancing the individuals' right to benefit from higher education with its social benefits in addition to

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November 2008; "Conference on Employability", Luxembourg, November 2008; "Equality in a Knowledge Based Society: How to Widen Opportunities?", Budapest, November 2008; "European Conference on Qualifications Frameworks", Tbilisi, November 2008; "Quality Assurance in Transnational Education - from Words to Action", London, December 2008; "Assessment of Prior Learning; Quality Assurance and Implementation of Procedures", Amsterdam, December 2008; "Joint Programmes and Student Mobility", Chelyabinsk, March 2009 (Bologna Secretariat 2009).

[26] A cumulative progression assumes that all mentioned features are considered to be valid unless they are challenged in a consecutive communiqué or declaration.

balancing the social and economic benefits of higher education. In the following documents, the economic role has been emphasised more than the social role. Accordingly, it has a supportive role for competitiveness by ensuring higher number of input (students) to higher education and hence highly qualified graduates to the labour market and by keeping their skills and knowledge up to date.

The social dimension is also included in the follow-up structures, i.e., international seminars, data collection processes and stocktaking exercises. The inclusion of the social dimension in the follow-up structures is important for showing the attention paid to it and for illustrating suggested measures to develop it as an action area. Almost in all follow-up periods international seminars were devoted to the social dimension and in 2005 a special working group was formed to work on the social dimension. The need for data collection in general and specifically on the socio-economic conditions of students has continuously and clearly been stated in all official Bologna Process documents. This call, in time, defined the relevant tasks in a more systematic and detailed way and assigned them to certain institutions. The ministers assigned the task to the EUROStudent in 2007. The EUROStudent survey collects data on the socio-economic conditions of the higher education students in the Bologna Process countries. As being the only survey focusing on the social dimension in such a large scale, the EUROStudent has a special importance for the development of the social dimension. The challenge due to the diversity of higher education systems and the importance of such a survey covering so many Bologna countries with various comparable indicators shall be acknowledged. However, the data have serious insufficiencies due to the vague definition of indicators, as well as incompleteness. The EUROStudent III survey includes data from 33 of the 45 countries at that time. The ESU representative in the "Equality in a Knowledge Based Society: How to Widen Opportunities?" international seminar states limitations in the collected data as the lack of information on the size and reasons of underrepresentation and on the student support measures (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 5). Furthermore, the survey covers only part of the social dimension (i.e., access) and does not provide information on the progression and the completion of studies. The inclusion of the social dimension in the stocktaking exercise happened only for the 2007-2009 period. This is an important step for the development of the social dimension. However, the structure of the social dimension section is completely different than the rest of the report. The other sections are prepared with a benchmarking view, whereas the social dimension section is more in the form of a general report than an evaluation exercise. The Bologna Process reforms are largely steered with the help of benchmarking exercises and no common actions to be evaluated reduces the motivation of countries to take action, as it has been until 2010.

The development of the social dimension shows that it is mostly considered as a principle level issue when it comes to its status. Yet, at the same time, the follow-up of the social dimension suggests that it is also treated as an action area. However, this section of the social dimension has had a problematic development. The call for better monitoring of the social dimension appears continuously in the same way, suggesting almost no results beyond confirmations. Furthermore, the call for setting individual measures at the national level and hence monitoring each country separately rather than at the Bologna level is problematic. Even though the difference between countries is a valid argument, as it is for all Bologna action areas; this call is conflicting with the aim of the Bologna Process of enhancing comparability and compatibility. Furthermore, it makes the task, which is already complex and difficult, almost impossible.

4.2. The Definition of the Social Dimension at the Bologna Process Level

The analysis of the official Bologna Process documents shows that it is not possible to find a clear definition of the social dimension. Also the BFUG-WG, which was formed with the aim of providing a definition for the social dimension, opted for not giving a clear-cut definition and detailed means for the social dimension, but instead underlined the commitment to the reflection of diversity on the student body (Secretariat of the Bologna Process 2007: 9). Considering that the Bologna Process progresses by utilising action lines in order to achieve certain goals, the research discusses the social dimension at three hierarchical levels: strategic goals, operational goals and means to achieve these goals. The strategic goals are defined as ultimate aims of the social dimension in the Bologna Process, operational goals are the intermediary objectives to reach the strategic goals and the means are the concrete actions to achieve these goals.

4.2.1. The Strategic Goals of the Social Dimension

The strategic goals of the social dimension are analysed chronologically. As mentioned before, the social dimension has had a cumulative development, meaning features are added or removed in time. Table 4.3 shows their development.

Table 4.3 Strategic Goals of the Social Dimension as Mentioned in Ministerial Documents (2001-2010)

	Prague 2001	Berlin 2003	Bergen 2005	London 2007	Leuven 2009	Budapest 2010
Strengthening social cohesion and reducing inequalities	√	√		√		
Reflecting the diversity/Achieving participative equity				√	√	
Maximising the level of knowledge, skills and competences				√	√	

Source: Extracted from the ministerial communiqués and declarations (2001-2010)

In the Prague Communiqué (2001), the ministers mentioned achieving social cohesion under "Lifelong learning" for the first time. The participants of the "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" seminar (2003) defined enhancing social cohesion and equity goals in relation to the social dimension (Neetens 2003: 3).

Affirming the seminar conclusions, the ministers stated "strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities both at national and at European level" in the Berlin Communiqué (2003) in relation to the social dimension. This goal is mentioned in the same way in the 2005 General Report (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 21). Achieving social cohesion and reducing inequality goals are central also in the international Bologna seminar on the "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-wide Competition" (2005). The participants mentioned that social cohesion necessitates ensuring equality of opportunities in access to higher education and employability of graduates (Stastna 2005: 1). In 2007, with the BFUG-WG's suggestion, the emphasis shifted to the reflection of the social diversity: "the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education should reflect the diversity of our populations" (BFUG-WG 2007: 14). This definition targets at better inclusion of underrepresented groups in higher education. The 2007 Stocktaking Report also mentions the inclusion of traditionally underrepresented groups in higher

education in order to achieve "social and economic cohesion" (BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking 2007:41).

The suggestion of the BFUG-WG on reflecting diversity is exactly phrased in the London Communiqué (2007). The 2009 General Report further explains the issue with reference to the welfare state and its functions in redistributing wealth through investing in social mobility and younger generations. Accordingly, ensuring the inclusion of disadvantaged groups is a responsibility of the welfare state (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 8). The report mentions the goal of reflecting the diversity of societies, especially of different age groups, also with reference to the challenges of an ageing Europe, increasing demand for talented people due to technological developments and increasing global competition (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 20). The inclusion of underrepresented groups is also stated as important for addressing societal issues, such as achieving "social cohesion" and "taping into intellectual potential which has hitherto been neglected" (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 20).

Achieving participative equity is observed as a central element of the 2009 Stocktaking Report in relation to the social dimension. The report confirms the goal of ensuring equity in "entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels" (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 126). The report mentions the common notion of equity as the tolerability of inequalities as long as they are related to individual preferences and efforts and intolerability of inequalities originating from "circumstances which are beyond a person's control" such as "family background, living area, ethnicity, gender or presence of a disability" (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 126). The 2009 Stocktaking Report highlights the importance of reflecting diversity under the challenges of globalisation, demographic changes and the current (2008) financial crisis. The Leuven Communiqué (2009) reaffirms the goal of reflecting the diversity of Europe's populations in the student body.

The London Communiqué (2007) adds, indeed embeds in, a further strategic goal to the previous goals: "raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society." This means "maximising the potential of individuals in terms of their personal development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society." This goal is synchronised with a nuance in the role of the social dimension. After 2007, the emphasis on achieving social cohesion and reflecting diversity goals are related to meeting the challenges of the competitive knowledge economies and ageing societies. The 2009 General Report (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 8) affirms the goal of maximising the use of resources and capacity of European citizens in support of knowledge economies of ageing societies (Leuven Communiqué 2009). There is not any specific reference to the strategic goals in the Budapest-Vienna Declaration (2010).

In conclusion, achieving social cohesion and reducing inequalities are the first strategic goals related to the social dimension in 2003. These goals are taken over with the formulation of the key strategic goal of the social dimension in 2007 as reflecting the diversity of the population in the student body. Another goal, defined in 2007, is ensuring the maximisation of capacities. With the addition of this last strategic goal, it is possible to see two sides in goal definition as well, i.e., social versus economic.

4.2.2. The Operational Goals of the Social Dimension

The change of emphasis in the strategic goals of the social dimension, i.e., initially on social cohesion and reduction of inequalities and later on reflecting the diversity, reflects on the

operational goals. The emphasis is initially on ensuring equal opportunities for all and then includes a special emphasis on underrepresented groups.

Table 4.4 Operational Goals of the Social Dimension as Mentioned in Ministerial Documents (2001-2010)

	Prague 2001	Berlin 2003	Bergen 2005	London 2007	Leuven 2009	Budapest 2010
Making quality higher education equally accessible to all		√	√	√	√	√
Ensuring completion of studies		√	√	√	√	
Widening access/participation			√	√	√	

Source: Extracted from the ministerial communiqués and declarations (2001-2010)

Widening access is mentioned for the first time in the 2001 General Report in relation to transnational education which is advocated for offering possibilities of "access to higher education to students that otherwise would not have that possibility" (Lourtie 2001: 6). According to this interpretation, transnational education is a way to widen access by increasing the supply, especially in countries with limited higher education provision. This interpretation is not followed up in relation to the social dimension.

The participants of the "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" seminar (2003) reminded that all Bologna signatories have also signed and ratified the "United Nations Covenant on Economical, Social and Cultural Rights", which states that "[h]igher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education" (Neetens 2003:2). People with capacities should be able to access to and complete their higher education studies, which requires equal (i.e., based on merit and capacities) and free (i.e., tuition free) access (ibid.:3). Therefore, the participants called for making higher education "equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity" in the context of higher education (Zgaga 2003: 79). The participants also recommended ensuring the participation of underrepresented groups, which are specified as "persons stemming from lower socio-economic classes, ethnic minorities, immigrants, disabled persons, etc." and non-traditional students, such as mature and/or employed people in higher education (Neetens 2003: 3). The 2003 General Report includes a contribution from the Equal Access Network (EAN) which also mentions achieving the equality of access to education. The EAN stated its concern about the status of "access and equity issues" in the Bologna Process and highlighted the role of the Bologna Process in including disadvantaged and underrepresented groups in higher education. "[G]ender, ethnic origin, nationality, age, disability, family background, vocational training, geographic location, or earlier educational disadvantage" are listed as common reasons of underrepresentation (Zgaga 2003: 34). This reference highlights the importance of underrepresented groups' access, in addition to the access for all in the Bologna Process.

The Berlin Communiqué (2003) includes "making higher education equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means". Especially, after the Berlin Communiqué, the social dimension is associated with the goal of equal access for all on the basis of capacity and without any social or financial discrimination. In the Bergen

Communiqué (2005) with "making *quality* higher education equally accessible to all" the quality aspect is added.

The reference to improving the inclusion of underrepresented groups continues in the Bergen Communiqué which states that special actions shall be taken to ensure the access of people from "socially disadvantaged groups [...] with a view to widening access". In a similar way, the BFUG-WG Report suggests "taking action to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity" (BFUG-WG 2007: 14). The 2007 Stocktaking Report touches upon the access of traditionally underrepresented people in higher education (BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking 2007:41). The London Communiqué (2007) states "non-discrimination and equitable access" principles to be promoted in the whole EHEA. These references have placed the emphasis on ensuring access of underrepresented groups to higher education. In other words, the social dimension is not only about increasing general access, but also about access of underrepresented groups. The inclusion of the goal of widening access is in accordance with the clear articulation of reflecting diversity as a strategic goal. This goal is further elaborated in the "Equality in a Knowledge-based Society - How to Widen Opportunities?" seminar. The participants underlined that ensuring access for underrepresented groups cannot be achieved by trying to ensure access for all (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 11):

> "the liberal minimum, respect for equal treatment and for equality of opportunities, is not sufficient in itself to encourage talented young people with disadvantages, like those brought up in poverty, living with a disability or belonging to ethnic minorities, to get to higher education and to facilitate their social mobility. These students need different forms of support to get into higher education institutions, to be successful in their studies and to be integrated in the labour market. Such efforts will also maximise the benefits of students accessing higher education and the efficiency of both public funding and students' private costs."

The 2009 Stocktaking Report defines "fair and equal access to all" as ensuring access for each citizen to "high quality education, regardless of social or economic background, race, religion or gender" (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 126). It points to "holders of professional qualifications or for people returning to higher education studies following a period of work experience" as groups to be considered in widening access measures (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 36). The 2009 General Report mentions people "from culturally and economically less privileged backgrounds" as groups to target (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 20).

The Leuven Communiqué (2009) also mentions the goal of widening access to higher education "by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups". The Leuven Communiqué (2009) mentions "widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education". In the Budapest-Vienna Declaration (2010), the ministers reaffirmed their commitment to "equal opportunities to quality education, paying particular attention to underrepresented groups".

Another operational goal is the successful completion of studies "within an appropriate period of time without obstacles related to their [students'] social and economic background". It is initially mentioned in the Berlin Communiqué (2003). Ensuring the completion of studies without any hindrance due to socio-economic background at all levels of education has been mentioned in all consecutive ministerial declarations directly in relation to the social dimension (except in the Budapest-Vienna Declaration). Like other social dimension goals, this goal also recognises the different needs of underrepresented

groups in the student body. It shall be noted that the completion of studies has not been emphasised as much as the equal access goal of the social dimension.

In 2007, parallel to the shift in the strategic goals, the goal of equal access to higher education received a nuance. The BFUG-WG added personal development and future benefits dimensions to equal access (BFUG-WG 2007: 12). Accordingly, action shall be taken to ensure equal access to knowledge, rather than equal access to higher education.

The participants of the "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-Wide Competition" seminar stated that socio-economic background "should not be a barrier to access to higher education, successful completion of studies and employment in 'matching' jobs after graduation" (Stastna 2005: 6). This interpretation brings together the goals of promoting equal access, progress and completion of higher education and adds the transition to the employment, as well. This goal, without the part on the transition to employment, is followed up in the BFUG-WG report (2007) and the London Communiqué (2007) with the statement of "student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations".

To sum up, first, the operational goals of the social dimension are ensuring equal access to quality higher education, progress in and completion of higher education studies. Second, all operational goals have an emphasis on underrepresented groups. Students raised the issue of equal access of people from disadvantaged backgrounds in 2001 and the note from EAN (2003) underlined it. This concern is elaborated in the Berlin Communiqué (2003), with its emphasis on the negative influence of socio-economic background on the completion of studies. The addition of widening access in the Bergen Communiqué (2005) increased the emphasis on the access of disadvantaged groups to higher education and its scope has been expanded to progress in and completion of studies in the London Communiqué (2007) with the inclusion of widening participation and reaffirmed in the Leuven Communiqué (2009) and the Budapest-Vienna Declaration (2010). The proclamation of underrepresented groups in higher education as the target group to ensure equal access for all and to widen access to higher education gave a more operational definition for the social dimension. By this means, the social dimension has gone beyond the principle level, non-challengeable and all agreeable "good wish". It received two levels of operation: the general (potential) student body and underrepresented groups. Thirdly, it is possible to observe a high correspondence between the strategic and operational goals of the social dimension. Achieving social cohesion and reflecting diversity goals are supported by all operational goals. In the beginning (2003), access was interpreted only as ensuring equal access for all and after 2005 it emphasised underrepresented groups; therefore, in a complete correspondence with the strategic goal of "student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations" (London Communiqué 2007). Since 2007, ensuring access for all is advocated in relation to its economic benefits, especially for individuals. The addition of maximising capacities as a strategic goal reflected on the operational goals as ensuring access and completion also in order to provide the individuals to accomplish themselves and to enjoy the benefits of being a higher education graduate.

Lastly, overlapping use of the terms access and participation shall be reflected on. In the Bologna Process context, the terms access and participation are not used with an agreed-

upon definition or consistent distinctions[27]. The analysis of the written documents show that the terms of access and participation are sometimes used synonymously and sometimes clearly differentiated from each other. In cases of clear differentiation, the Lisbon Recognition Convention provides a definition for access, i.e., right to apply for higher education studies. In this case, in the Bologna Process documents, the term participation is employed with reference both to the formal right to apply and to opportunity to get into higher education and start studying. However, this separation is not consistent. Occasionally, the term access is also employed for right to apply, opportunity to study and enrolment in higher education and the term participation for opportunity to study and enrolment. A similar situation can be observed with the use of the terms widening and increasing access and/or participation, which is reflected on in Chapter 5, as well.

4.2.3. The Means of the Social Dimension

The means of the social dimension are the specific actions to be taken in order to achieve the social dimension goals. Before continuing with the details of the means, it is important to mention certain characteristics: commonality and generic definitions. Like the goals of the Bologna Process, the means to achieve these goals are highly interdependent and interrelated. In many cases, the same means (e.g., the ECTS or qualifications frameworks) can be used for more than one action area (e.g., mobility, degree structures, etc.). This commonality is valid for the social dimension as well. This section introduces these means with respect to their relevance for the social dimension. Another characteristic of the Bologna Process' means is not being strictly defined in a "one size fits all" manner. For most of the Bologna Process reforms, the countries have been provided with generic guidelines and expected to translate them into their national contexts, e.g., ESG, national qualifications frameworks. The BFUG-WG report (2007: 15) recommends considering "national priorities and circumstances" in developing the means for the social dimension. One additional remark specifically concerns the means of the social dimension: As it is discussed above, the goals of social dimension have a clear emphasis on underrepresented groups. This emphasis becomes determining for the means. Since underrepresented groups have special obstacles to access to, progress in and complete their studies, they need special measures addressing those obstacles. Therefore, the social dimension needs to have general means ensuring participation and completion of everyone and specific means ensuring the participation and completion of underrepresented groups.

As mentioned above, the ministerial documents are produced as strategic documentation of the goals. In this form, they do not include detailed information on the means. The relevant means of the social dimension are mostly found in the BFUG, Secretariat and working group reports. There are a variety of means to achieve the goals of the social dimension. Table 4.5 lists them in the way they are mentioned in the ministerial documents.

Table 4.5 Means of the Social Dimension Mentioned in Ministerial Documents (2001-2010)

	Prague 2001	Berlin 2003	Bergen 2005	London 2007	Leuven 2009	Budapest 2010
Services for studying and		√	√	√	√	

[27] In the context of this research the term participation is used in the sense of right to apply, opportunity to study and actual studying.

living/student services						
Financial and economic help			√	√	√	
Guidance and counselling services			√	√		
Flexible learning pathways				√		
Removing barriers to study					√	
Improving the learning environment					√	

Source: Extracted from the ministerial communiqués and declarations (2001-2010)

The means of the social dimension are defined with different perspectives in different documents. The participants of the "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" seminar (2003) analysed the means of the social dimension in terms of pre-higher education and higher education periods, both of which shall take into account the general (potential) student body and underrepresented groups (Neetens 2003: 3). The BFUG-WG report (2007) provides a list of possible means from a mobility perspective and groups the issues into the "social dimension in the home country of the student" and "the social dimension of mobility". While the former group covers issues in relation to equal access to higher education and completion of studies independent of people's socio-economic backgrounds at all levels of education; the latter group includes the portability of loans and grants, overcoming obstacles in accessing study and training opportunities abroad for students and the "recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing statutory rights for teachers, researchers and administrative staff" (BFUG-WG 2007: 13). The 2009 General Report lists means as financial means, entry qualifications, flexible learning opportunities, support services and "institutional culture" (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 8). In the context of this research, the means of the social dimension are discussed in three major groups of admission mechanisms, flexible learning paths and student services.

4.2.3.1. Admission Mechanisms

Within the Bologna Process, admission mechanisms are mentioned in terms of promoting flexible pathways into higher education. These means are stated as regulations and recognition measures in the official documents.

Creating legislation to promote equal access not only for the general student body, but also for underrepresented groups is mentioned in the international Bologna seminar on the "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-wide Competition" (Stastna 2005: 2). In accordance with this suggestion, the availability of "simple, fair and transparent admission rules" and avoiding discrimination in legislation are recommended in the BFUG-WG report to ensure equal access for all (BFUG-WG 2007: 15). Moreover, the report draws attention to the European Convention on Human Rights, guaranteeing access "to all without direct or indirect discrimination on any actual or presumed ground". Concerning underrepresented groups, it mentions the Council of Europe's recommendation on adopting special measures for ensuring access considering "the specific conditions of individuals or groups in society" as long as they are in compliance with the non-discrimination principle (BFUG-WG 2007: 14). In this sense, the provision of anti-discriminatory legislation is often stated as a must. This measure can be considered as a means to ensure equal access for all. The insufficiency of this condition for the inclusion of underrepresented groups in higher education is suggested by the participants of the

"Equality in a Knowledge-based Society - How to Widen Opportunities?" seminar (2008) who mentioned that the availability of anti-discriminatory legislation is necessary but not sufficient to ensure the equity of participation (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 2). The social dimension section of the 2009 Stocktaking Report mentions the need for anti-discriminatory legislation and regulating and monitoring agencies to assist higher education institutions "to attract and support students from underrepresented groups" (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 136).

Within the Bologna Process context often mentioned recognition measures are the recognition of prior learning and qualifications frameworks. These means are primarily mentioned in relation to lifelong learning.

The recognition of prior learning is promoted for providing access to higher education when people do not meet the mainstream entry requirements, in other words people without formal entry requirements. It is considered as a means to ensure equal access for non-traditional groups and to raise the level of knowledge and educational attainment (Lourtie 2001: 17). Prior learning can be recognised to waive parts of the courses and/or to award full degrees and to offer flexible entry requirements (Zgaga 2003: 83). The Bergen Communiqué (2005) suggests improving the "recognition of prior learning including, where possible, non-formal and informal learning for access to, and as elements in, higher education programmes". The 2001 and 2003 General Reports and the 2007 and 2009 Stocktaking Reports advocate the recognition of prior learning for wider groups' access to higher education in the lifelong learning context (Lourtie 2001: 17, Zgaga 2003: 83, BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking 2007:36, Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 26). The London (2007) and Leuven (2009) Communiqués also emphasise the importance of the recognition of prior informal and non-formal learning. The countries are encouraged to take necessary legislative measures.

Qualifications frameworks are also advocated for making "higher education accessible to everyone without social or economic obstacles" and are recommended to be linked to the social dimension (BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking 2007: 51, 54). Qualifications frameworks are expected to increase the flexibility in access by providing transparency of qualifications and making informal and non-formal prior learning recognisable. In this sense, the definition of qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 26) and student-centred learning (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 20) in way to include prior non-formal and informal learning are recommended.

4.2.3.2. Flexible Learning Paths in Higher Education

The provision of flexible learning paths is mostly mentioned as a means to ensure the progression and completion of higher education studies for wider groups of society and sometimes as a measure to decrease dropout rates in general (cf. Neetens 2003: 3). This means is also mainly related to lifelong learning and has been included in the social dimension with the increasing emphasis on underrepresented groups, especially for people coming from non-traditional educational paths.

The adoption of three cycle degree structure together with the modularisation of courses is expected to increase the flexibility of study programmes (Lourtie 2001: 23). The three cycle degree structure is stated to have more flexibility compared to the traditional long cycle degree structure. The expected shorter study duration and student-centeredness of the modularised programmes are advocated for bringing more flexibility and hence supporting the completion of studies. The participants of the "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-Wide Competition" seminar (2005) recommended having

flexibility in curriculum design and teaching methodology to increase access (Stastna 2005: 2). The definition of "modules/units, study programmes and qualifications" based on learning outcomes is expected to ease the comparison of informal, non-formal and formal learning and hence increase flexibility (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 13). In addition to this, the consideration of social and market responsiveness in curriculum design to be able to address the diverse needs of a diverse student body is suggested (Stastna 2005: 5).

Another structural tool is the ECTS. The use of the ECTS or a compatible system to provide more flexibility, especially for non-traditional learners, was mentioned by the participants of the "Exploring the Social Dimension of European Higher Education Area" seminar (2003). The 2003 General Report also mentions the ECTS as a flexibility tool that "facilitates individual learning paths" and allows greater student choice (Zgaga 2003: 83). The 2009 Stocktaking Report mentions its flexibility for enabling learners to gather credits outside of "the conventional model of whole-time study" (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 27). These structural tools are expected to ease the completion of studies by providing more flexible and individually adaptable forms.

Flexible delivery modes are also recommended as means to support the completion of studies (cf. Neetens 2003). The BFUG-WG also mentioned "flexible learning paths into and within higher education" in this context and recommended the modification of curricula, the flexibility of delivery and tracking academic success as retention measures (BFUG-WG 2007: 15). In the London Communiqué (2007) "the creation of flexible learning pathways into and within higher education" is also mentioned in relation to the social dimension.

The social dimension section of the 2009 Stocktaking Report mentions educational schemes (e.g., language training, pre-school education, first cycle programs in the languages of significant minorities), cultural integration, affirmative action programmes and flexibility of learning delivery modes as underrepresented group specific means (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 137). The Leuven Communiqué (2009) mentions the promotion of flexible studies "including part-time studies, as well as workbased routes" and short cycle degrees as means of lifelong learning. These means support the social dimension goals, as well.

The mentioned flexibility means can be seen as supportive primarily for the completion of studies and secondarily for encouraging participation in higher education. However, as their primary definition area is not the social dimension, they mostly target at the inclusion of diverse student groups with respect to their educational paths, prior qualifications or age (mature students); hence, a special group of underrepresented learners, namely the non-traditional learners, are addressed. This is clearly stated in the 2009 Stocktaking Report as the provision of flexible learning paths for "opening up opportunities for people who are newly unemployed to enhance their skills and employability" (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 86). Furthermore, the flexibility emphasis of these means is more of a discourse than empirically based claim. This issue is further discussed in Chapter Variety of Learning Modes5.2.2.5.

4.2.3.3. Student Services

The availability of widespread and sufficient student services is another means to encourage access and to support progress and completion of higher education studies for all and for underrepresented groups. Student services, different from other means, are mentioned directly with reference to the social dimension. The provision of "adequate social student infrastructure" to ensure the completion of studies "on time and with the biggest welfare possible" was mentioned firstly in the "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European

Higher Education Area" Seminar (Neetens 2003: 3). In the Berlin meeting (2003), the ministers called for the provision of "appropriate studying and living conditions for the students" and confirmed it in their consecutive meetings. The Leuven Communiqué (2009) gives more detail as "improving the learning environment, removing all barriers to study, and creation of appropriate economic conditions for students at all levels of studies." Student services cover a wide range of activities and are grouped into guidance and counselling, financial aid and general student services in this section.

Guidance and Counselling

Guidance and counselling services are recommended to be provided for potential students to promote access, for students to support completion of studies or avoid dropouts, as well as for underrepresented groups.

The provision of information is mentioned to promote access to higher education. The 2001 General Report mentions the provision of special information and guidance on accommodation, health care and integration as important components of student services, both for national and international students (Lourtie 2001: 11). In this report, providing information and guidance for students and candidates is mentioned in relation to attracting international students; therefore, more as a marketing strategy. Still, these points have been followed up in the social dimension context to promote access to and to support progress in higher education studies. The "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" seminar (2003) report includes the provision of "decent information campaigns" that would be carried out based on cooperation between secondary and higher education (Neetens 2003: 3). The 2009 Stocktaking Report also states the provision of information in secondary education and the provision of "simple, transparent, and easily accessible" information on admission and study grants as a means to promote access (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 131). The Leuven Communiqué (2009) recommends ensuring "[t]he accessibility, quality of provision and transparency of information" as part of lifelong learning.

In the "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" seminar the participants mentioned the need for an "adequate social student infrastructure" to support the completion of studies and recommended the provision of "relevant academic, social and legal guidance and counselling", "job and career services", as well as special counselling to avoid dropouts (Neetens 2003: 3). The participants of the "Social Dimension of the EHEA and World-wide Competition" seminar highlighted the necessity of guidance and counselling services during higher education studies (Stastna 2005: 5). The BFUG-WG report mentions the guidance and counselling services for academic, career and daily life issues "including financial and legal advice for students" as means to support progression and completion of studies (BFUG-WG 2007: 15-16). In a similar way, the 2009 Stocktaking Report mentions guidance and counselling at all levels to support progression and completion of studies and hence to "reduce the level of dropout" in the social dimension section as a general measure (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 131).

The provision of guidance and counselling services targeting at underrepresented groups is also mentioned (cf. the Bergen Communiqué 2005, BFUG-WG 2007). The participants of the "Equality in a Knowledge-based Society – How to Widen Opportunities?" seminar (2008) explained it with the fact that people from disadvantaged backgrounds do not only lack "necessary financial resources", but also "social and cultural capital" which includes the lack of information. Therefore, they recommended providing guidance and counselling

addressing these groups and providing better online information on the social dimension of the Bologna Process and the national provisions of financial aid, special aids for students with disabilities, etc. in the international and national Bologna web pages (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 13).

Financial Support

Financial support for students can be considered as one of the most influential factors for participation in and completion of higher education studies and to avoid obstacles originating from the economic background of people. In most of the documents, the student financial aid measures are mentioned with a special emphasis on underrepresented groups.

The 2001 and 2003 General Reports mention the need for adequate financial aid for students (i.e. grants and/or loans) to ensure equal access to higher education for all (Lourtie 2001:33, Zgaga 2003: 50). The participants of the "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-wide Competition" seminar mentioned the importance of adequate funding to achieve the social dimension goals. The provision of sufficient financial support for students was stated to be especially important in order to ease the burden of increasing living and study costs (Stastna 2005: 3).

The participants of the "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" Seminar (2003) stated that "tuition fees can form severe access thresholds" especially for people from lower economic backgrounds. Hence, they recommended either the abolishment or reduction of tuition fees as much as possible (Neetens 2003: 3). This is the only reference made to tuition free education in the official documents to ensure equity in access, progress and completion.

The Bergen Communiqué (2005) mentions the provision of financial and economic help for students, especially from socially disadvantaged groups. The BFUG-WG report (2007: 16) lists means concerning student finances as "appropriate and coordinated national financial support systems that are transparent, support for disadvantaged groups as defined nationally and support measures for students with children". In the 2009 General Report, "improving the learning environment and creating the appropriate economic conditions for students to be able to benefit from the study opportunities at all levels" are mentioned as services especially for the first and second cycles. Specific to the third cycle, the report mentions further support on social security and pension rights or equivalents for doctoral candidates (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 9). The Leuven Communiqué (2009) includes "creating the appropriate economic conditions for students to be able to benefit from the study opportunities at all levels". The other communiqués did not mention the student finances or financial aid for students as a specific measure.

Targeted aid for underrepresented groups are mentioned in the form of indirect support (e.g., tax exemptions, family allowances, subsidies for accommodation, food, transportation, health) and direct support (e.g., grants and/or loans, scholarships and reimbursement of tuition fees) (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 135). In addition to these, the 2009 Stocktaking Report mentions financial support to be provided to higher education institutions for additional costs of actions taken for underrepresented groups, such as the development of "the necessary infrastructure and programmes of action to support wider access for people with a disability, mature students, people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and refugee communities, etc." (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 133).

General Student Services

Services to support daily life of students are important means mainly to ensure the progression and completion of studies by improving studying and living conditions of students. Like other student services, one of the major aims is to overcome the obstacles related to the socio-economic background of students. Although these services show a great variety, frequently mentioned services are health care, housing, food and transportation services (Neetens 2003, Zgaga 2003, BFUG-WG 2007, Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009). In addition to these, the BFUG-WG (2007: 15) and the 2009 Stocktaking Report (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 132) suggests a comprehensive list of general services as "working tools and environment (well functioning libraries, lecture halls and seminar rooms, internet access, access to scientific data bases etc.), support for students with special needs and students with children".

4.2.3.4. Conclusion

The social dimension means include providing flexible and transparent admission mechanisms, flexible learning paths and student services, i.e., guidance and counselling, financial aid and general student services. Among these means, only student services are directly linked to the social dimension. The documents on student services mostly mention the need for taking special action in order to increase participation of people coming from underrepresented backgrounds. The ministerial level documents mostly define the student services in relation to ensuring a healthy study period. Discussions in Chapter 5.2.2 provide further reflections on possible student services.

The other means are mostly defined in relation to other action areas, i.e., mobility, degree structures and lifelong learning. Even though it is possible to link these means to the operational goals of the social dimension, the fact that they are defined primarily within other action areas becomes problematic especially when there is a need for underrepresented groups-targeted actions. The indirectly linked means have a perspective that defines underrepresented groups only as adult learners or applicants coming from non-traditional learning paths. In this sense, they mostly deal with facilitating recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning and provision of various study modes that would facilitate this group's participation. While the level of achievement in improving recognition and flexibility is a matter subject to discussion, it is clear that the primary goal of these means is not necessarily achieving participative equity.

4.3. The Definition of the Social Dimension by the Actors

Who thinks what on the social dimension? It is a known fact and acknowledged advantage that the Bologna Process involves a variety of actors (cf. CHEPS, ECOTEC & INCHER 2010). These actors bring along their various and possibly conflicting interests which shape their understandings and interpretations of the action areas. This section shows how each actor understands the social dimension applying the same categories of development (i.e., status, role and follow-up), goals (i.e., strategic and operational) and means. This section illuminates whether there is a common definition of the social dimension.

Chapter 3 already introduced the main policy actors[28] including their involvement in the Bologna Process and focus of action (please see Annex VI for a summary table). These actors

[28] *Members:* 47 countries and the European Commission, *consultative members:* the Council of Europe, UNESCO-CEPES, the European University Association (EUA), the European Students Union (ESU), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the European Association

include representatives from governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. This chapter focuses on the last two. As it was articulated in the interviews with the international stakeholders, they are quite influential in bringing in new topics to the Bologna Process agenda and leading the discussions in relation to these topics. Each organisation has different priority issues in the Bologna Process depending on its missions. While some of the organisations have been the policy advocates of the social dimension, some others have not paid any attention to it. In this sense, this section initially finds out the "important actors" for the social dimension. In deciding these actors, all Bologna Process follow-up activities in 1999-2010 and their documentation are extensively researched. Please see Annex VII for the involvement of actors in the social dimension related follow-up activities. Accordingly, the important actors for the social dimension are the EC, the Council of Europe, the ESU, the EI, the EURASHE and the EUA. Secondly, it analyses the understandings of the "important actors" based on the goals and means of the social dimension. The findings of this section is compared and contrasted with the ones from the ministerial documents.

4.3.1. The European Commission

The EC has continuously stated its support for the Bologna Process with specific reference to the internationalisation and competitiveness, employability and ensuring sustainable growth of knowledge economies. These points are also raised in its major policy initiatives, i.e., the Lisbon Strategy, the Modernisation Agenda and the Copenhagen Process. In relation to these goals, the priority areas for the EC in the Bologna Process context are degree structures, mobility, quality assurance and lifelong learning. In other words, the social dimension has not been a priority area for the EC. In the EC contribution reports for the Bologna Process in 2001, 2003 and 2005 there is not any reference to the social dimension. In its 2007 report, the EC interpreted "the core Bologna reforms" to be achieved by 2010 as "comparable qualifications (short cycle, bachelor, master, doctorate); flexible, modernised curricula at all levels which correspond to the needs of the labour market; and trustworthy quality assurance systems" (European Commission 2007: 1). In this report it also took note of the social dimension without a further specification. In a similar way, the 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2007 General Reports[29] prepared for the ministerial meetings do not include any specific action/event on the social dimension of the EC. In addition to this, the Eurydice reports[30] 2003-2010 are analysed. The 2003 and 2004 reports do not mention the social dimension at all. The 2007 and 2009 reports include it only as a future priority area mentioned in the ministerial communiqués. The 2009 report also mentions the social dimension relevant issues, i.e., financial aid and study costs, but with reference to mobility. Only the 2010 report includes detailed analyses of the social dimension.

The lack of attention for the social dimension is also mentioned during the interview. The EC interviewee, highlighting that it is his personal view, stated that "the social dimension did not have any observable influence so far and is not expected to have". He considers the social dimension as an area which is difficult to measure and hence difficult to achieve certain changes or implementations (EC interview 2009). This low level of attention from the EC is

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for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, the Education International Pan-European Structure (EI) and the BUSINESSEUROPE.

[29] The 2009 General Report does not have such a section.

[30] The Eurydice prepared the "Focus on Higher Education in Europe" reports for the European Commission.

especially important considering the fact that the EC is a stakeholder with large financial resources. Nevertheless, the goals and means of the social dimension somehow found a place in the EC documents. Moreover, the EC provided financial support for relevant projects, e.g., the EUROStudent Survey.

4.3.1.1. Strategic Goals

The European Council mentioned the goal of ensuring social cohesion in its Lisbon Strategy[31] (2000) which is quoted in the Berlin Communiqué. The affirmation of this goal in such a context also hints at the balancer role of the social dimension defined in the Bologna Process context. The EC also touched upon the goal of achieving participative equity. The term equity is defined as (European Commission 2006b: 2):

> "the extent to which individuals can take advantage of education and training, in terms of opportunities, access, treatment and outcomes. Equitable systems ensure that the outcomes of education and training are independent of socio-economic background and other factors that lead to educational disadvantage and that treatment reflects individuals' specific learning needs".

The quote, however, continues stating that

> "Inequity in relation to gender, ethnic minority status, disability and regional disparities etc. is not the prime focus here, but is relevant as far as it contributes to overall socio-economic disadvantage."

Such an equity definition recognises it as a concept, but makes it redundant by considering it as a value not for itself but for its contribution to the economy. Underrepresented groups receive attention only if their situation becomes socio-economically unbeneficial. This equity definition is in line with the social cohesion definition of the EC, i.e., social cohesion as a necessity for sustainable economic growth.

In 2009, the EC clearly stated that it shares the reflection of diversity goal, yet as a goal of lifelong learning without any reference to the social dimension. Therefore, it interpreted this goal in relation to widening access for adult learners, e.g., increasing the participation rate of 30-34 year olds, non-traditional and part-time learners (European Commission 2009: 5, European Commission 2010). In the closing speech in the Budapest ministerial meeting, the commissioner affirmed the same goal with the age focus, but this time in relation to the social dimension (Vassiliou 2010: 3). The 2010 Eurydice report also mentions the reflection of diversity goal very clearly (Eurydice 2010: 27). Unlike other EC documents, this report has a broader perception of underrepresented groups and provides details to the issue, such as the identification and monitoring of underrepresented groups and the reasons and solutions for underrepresentation.

The EC also referred to the maximising capacities goal. Accordingly, everyone with capacities shall be supported to access and complete higher education studies (European Commission 2006a: 3). This goal is related to the employability goal, i.e., to ensure that higher education graduates have the opportunity to maximise their skills and competences in order to meet the labour market needs in the best way.

[31] In the Lisbon European Council meeting in 2000, the objective to make Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" by 2010 was set.

4.3.1.2. Operational Goals

Increasing access to higher education, ensuring equal access opportunities for all and achieving more equitable access to higher education are often mentioned as goals by the EC (Figel' 2005, European Commission 2005, European Commission 2007, Figel' 2009). These goals are mostly related to the qualities of the future labour force. The low unemployment rate among higher education graduates compared to non-higher education graduates is interpreted as an indicator showing the necessity to increase access rates (COM 58 2003: 4). The EC also mentions widening access as a goal. Yet, as it is also hinted by the equity definition, the target group is considered non-traditional learners. This interpretation relates to lifelong learning and has no reference to the social dimension.

The completion of studies goal appears in the EC contributions as decreasing dropout rates. The nuance between the two wordings becomes clear when the related goals are considered. According to the EC, the massification of higher education with the "education for everybody" approach "with no fundamental change in university structures and living conditions" and the right to access higher education after "a successful secondary school career [...] with no additional selection" increased dropout rates (COM 58 2003: 12). This is considered as a waste of resources and loss both for the society and economy. Therefore, dropout rates shall be reduced in order to increase efficiency. This is different than the social dimension's completion of studies without any hindrance due to the socio-economic backgrounds of students. The main difference relates to the fact that the EC's emphasises decreasing overall rates without paying any attention to the situation of the underrepresented groups.

4.3.1.3. Means

Concerning admission, the EC proposes means that would address the obstacles of people with non-formal and informal prior learning. The EC advocates the qualifications frameworks for achieving equity. Accordingly, the qualifications frameworks will enable the validation of prior learning which is especially important for disadvantaged groups since they tend to gain their skills and competences in non-formal or informal contexts (European Commission 2006b: 4).

In the Modernisation Agenda (European Commission 2006a: 3), flexible learning paths are strongly recommended to widen and increase access and to ensure the completion of studies. Accordingly, higher education institutions shall increase the diversity of their course offers in order to be able to address different learners. These can be "non-degree retraining courses for adults or gap courses for students not coming through the traditional routes" (European Commission 2006a: 3) and "more tailor-made programmes" for non-formal and informal learners (European Commission 2009: 5, European Commission 2010: 5). Again for non-traditional students, higher education institutions are encouraged to provide information on their practices, "to create 'assessment facilities' for counselling" (European Commission 2009: 5, European Commission 2010: 5).

While pointing to financial support for ensuring access to and completion of studies, especially for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, the EC criticises free education. According to the EC, free education "does not necessarily guarantee social equity" which is based on the regression argument (please see Chapter 5 for a discussion on the regressive effect). Furthermore, in order to balance the costs borne by society and individuals based on the calculated rates of return and to support higher education institutions with extra funding, the key solution is charging tuition fees from "the main direct beneficiaries of

higher education" (European Commission 2006b: 7, European Commission 2007: 8). This is considered necessary also to improve quality, management and student motivation (European Commission 2006b: 8). In order to ensure the participation of people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, the application of appropriate measures together with tuition fees is advocated. These measures can be "guaranteeing bank loans and offering income-contingent loans, scholarships and means-tested grants" (European Commission 2006b: 8).

To sum up, the EC supports the goals of the Bologna Process as they are in line with the major objectives of the EC, namely internationalisation, employability and economic growth. In this sense, it has the main emphasis on increasing the number of higher education graduates in order to ensure sustainable economic growth and a high quality labour force, which in turn are expected to increase the competitiveness of Europe. Further disadvantages would become problematic if they hinder achieving these goals. This situation also explains the definition of underrepresented groups primarily in relation to age and educational path.

4.3.2. The Council of Europe

The main focus of work of the Council of Europe in the Bologna Process context has been on the lifelong learning, mobility and quality assurance action areas. As for the means, its work has focused on the development of recognition tools, e.g., qualifications frameworks and the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

In 1999-2001, even though its work included equity or social cohesion concerns, these are handled under lifelong learning (cf. Workshop results on Lifelong Learning for Equity and Social Cohesion, 2001). In relation to the social dimension, the Council of Europe promoted the understanding of higher education as a public good and responsibility. In its 2002 Steering Committee on Higher Education and Research (CD-ESR) meeting, the Council of Europe proposed three additional areas to the Bologna Process: "(1) the issue of higher education as a public responsibility and a public good, (2) aspects of university autonomy, and (3) the role of legislation in the creation of the EHEA" (Zgaga 2003: 20). In 2003-2007, the contributions of the Council of Europe focus on the public responsibility issue (cf. Bologna Secretariat 2005: 46, Bologna Secretariat 2007: 23). This theme has a special status in the social dimension and is analysed separately as "a surrounding issue" of the social dimension in section 4.5.1. Another topic that the Council of Europe focuses on is the promotion of student participation in higher education governance (Council of Europe website[32] 2006). This element also has an unsteady relationship with the social dimension and hence is discussed as "a surrounding issue" of the social dimension.

The Council of Europe called for putting more effort on the social dimension, at least as much as was put in the structural reform areas (Council of Europe 2005). In the 2006 plenary session of the CD-ESR meeting, the social dimension is mentioned as an unsolved issue of the EHEA (Council of Europe 2006). In the speech to the London ministerial conference the same point was raised:

> "We would like the European Higher Education Area to inspire our students and staff to do their best, yet we find it easier to speak about our structure than about our values" (Bergan 2007: 2).

[32] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/ehea2010/Coe_and_Bologna_2006_EN.asp#TopOfPage

As this quote also shows, the Council of Europe considered the social dimension as a principle level issue. As it is also affirmed during the interview (CoE interview 2009), the social dimension is a lot more difficult to measure compared to structural reforms. For instance, the collection of data is considered problematic due to huge differences between the countries and restraint of many countries to collect some data that can reveal underrepresentation due to various reasons (CoE interview 2009). This was stated as a reason for the low level of awareness on and priority of the social dimension.

4.3.2.1. Strategic Goals

The strategic goals of the social dimension, especially enhancing social cohesion and achieving participative equity, are key concerns for the Council of Europe, considering its institutional missions (cf. "Access to Higher Education" and "Lifelong Learning for Equity and Social Cohesion" projects). In the message to the Bergen ministerial conference, the goals of social cohesion and maximising the potentials of citizens are highlighted (Council of Europe 2005). Accordingly, in order to create a cohesive EHEA, it is necessary to ensure that all individuals have the opportunities to "fully develop their abilities and potential".

4.3.2.2. Operational Goals

Concerning the operational goals the Council of Europe highlights equal access:

> "In keeping with its fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Council of Europe is committed to equal opportunities for higher education for all qualified candidates regardless of their gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status." (Zgaga 2003: 113)

During the interview, the Council of Europe representative also clearly stated the achievement of "equitable access and equitable completion of quality education" as the primary goals of the social dimension (CoE interview 2009). In these references, the need for further attention on the conditions of underrepresented groups is also included.

4.3.2.3. Means

The main contribution of the Council of Europe to the social dimension has been through the introduction of principles rather than applicable means; therefore, it is not possible to single out clearly defined means. Qualifications frameworks and other instruments are expected to help people with non-traditional qualifications and alternative backgrounds to find alternative pathways through education systems to qualifications (CoE interview2009).

It is possible to conclude that the Council of Europe perceived the social dimension as a pillar in its public responsibility understanding (cf. Council of Europe 2006). However, these principles are not possible to limit to the social dimension, which led them to be detached from the social dimension eventually. The increasing focus of work on the recognition issues meant only indirect attention to the social dimension.

4.3.3. The European Students' Union

The ESU (previously ESIB) has been the main policy entrepreneur for the social dimension. In the Göteborg Declaration (ESU 2001a), the ESU raises many features of the social dimension which later on are included in the ministerial documents, e.g., public good, public responsibility and equal access. As it is stated by all Bologna Process actors as well as in the Prague Communiqué (2001), the ESU introduced the social dimension into the Bologna Process agenda. The social dimension is in the centre of all ESU contributions to the Bologna Process. The ESU mentions that the social dimension is essential in the creation of an EHEA,

which cannot be achieved only through structural reforms (ESU 2001a, 2001b). It considers the social dimension as a transversal action area which should affect all action areas and as a fundamental element of the Bologna Process. Unlike other actors interpreting the social dimension occasionally and in relation to the other action areas, the ESU interpreted all other action areas in relation to the social dimension and included the social dimension continuously in its contributions as a priority issue.

The ESU acknowledges the balancing role of the social dimension (2003a, 2005c: 7):

> "The strong focus on economic goals in the Bologna process has been counterbalanced by the inclusion of the social dimension and the reaffirming of HE as a public good in the Prague communiqué. However, more work will need to be done to ensure that these objectives do not remain empty formulas but are met to ensure social inclusion and equity in the EHEA."

Concerning the position of the social dimension in the Bologna Process, the ESU finds its low status problematic. The ESU pointed out in all Bologna With Students Eyes reports that the social dimension is not a priority area at the European, national and institutional level Bologna implementations. During the interview it was stated that

> "When it comes to general discussions, the consultative members agree on the social dimension being a priority. But when it comes to more specific issues and prioritisation of the social dimension among the top three things that you fight for, we don´t have a lot of support. People prioritise things differently."(ESU1 interview 2009)

The ESU requests implementations for the social dimension like in other action areas. In this sense, the ESU mentioned setting the social dimension as a priority area and its inclusion in the stocktaking exercise (ESU 2005a, ESU 2007a). Despite recognising the limitation of the stocktaking exercise in measuring reality[33], it was stated that

> "there is a clear de-prioritisation of action lines that were not in stocktaking. You have maps, colours, score charts, etc. where stakeholders and ministries are looking at and if you don't have the social dimension there, it goes into a drawer, no one else will look at it" (ESU2 interview 2009).

The ESU also recommends using Bologna events as a platform to discuss possible actions and demanded "the same amount of attention as is given to the other action lines" from the ministers, as well as setting clear targets for relevant implementations (ESU 2009: 19). In 2010, considering the status of the social dimension, the ESU found it "a shame that no real action has been taken over the past ten years, to develop the social dimension of the European Higher Education Area" (ESU 2010: 91).

The ESU finds the lack of data on the socio-economic conditions of students and the lack of attention for the social dimension in other surveys on the Bologna Process problematic (ESU 2005b:6, 2007b: 10). The availability of sensible data is considered fundamental to recognise problems and measure the change in time (ESU 2007b: 14, 2009: 9). Addressing this problem, the ESU suggests collecting data on "parental educational, ethnic and cultural background, language spoken at home, marital status of parents or guardians including their contribution to student finances, available budget for students (including grants and loans), the effect of the financial situation on stress levels and mental health, estimated expenses, time spent working, amount of persons dependent of the student (children) and available social

[33] This is explained with the fact that the stocktaking reports are based on the national reports, which are self-assessment of the countries.

services" (ESU 2006: 3). In 2007, the ESU renews its call for taking action to produce "sufficient reliable and comparable data on the social and economic conditions of student life in Europe" and suggests entrusting this task to "professional data provider(s) such as the EUROSTUDENT Network" (ESU 2007a). In the Bologna With Student Eyes 2009, the ESU appreciates the data collected so far by EUROStudent and Eurostat and adds that "the gap is still deep" (ESU 2009: 18). It repeats its recommendation for developing indicators for data collection (ESU 2009: 20). In 2010, the ESU criticised the BFUG's reaction to the continuous lack of data. It stated that comparable data cannot be gathered "by asking the BFUG to define indicators for measuring and monitoring social conditions in the participating countries. Such indicators must be defined after a consensus has been found between the national agencies responsible for joint data collection" (ESU 2010: 91). In addition to this, it calls all ministers to join in the EUROStudent survey in order to have comparable data for all Bologna countries. It also suggests the preparation of national action plans and strategies on the social dimension (ESU 2007a). The ESU urges all signatory countries to act in this direction and to include students and other stakeholders in this process (ESU 2009: 19). The ESU also calls for the follow-up of the action plans at the Bologna level (ESU 2009: 12). This is considered important due to its potential to push countries to be more specific and closer to taking action (ESU1 interview 2009).

The ESU also raises issues that are not included in the ministerial communiqués. One of the principle level issues is that higher education is not a commodity, but a human right that cannot be traded; and hence, students are not passive consumers but active participants of higher education (ESU 2001b). It shall be noted that this understanding is mostly linked to the higher education as a public good and responsibility understanding. In this sense, it is neither rejected in the Bologna Process, nor explicitly affirmed.

4.3.3.1. Strategic Goals

The ESU continuously claims for "democratic and inclusive higher education" (ESU 2001b: 1). It is stated as one of the oldest aims of the ESU (ESU1 interview 2009). In this sense, the ESU affirms the goal of reflecting the diversity of the populations on "the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels" (ESU 2007a, 2009: 19, 2010: 89). It considers this goal as a way to achieve social cohesion (ESU 2007b: 10). The exclusion of capable people from higher education due to their backgrounds is rejected and "creating a higher education community that is based on fairness and quality" is defined as an ultimate goal (ESU 2006: 1). It is also noted that this target "must be implemented in a balanced way" that takes into account "participative equity and fully accessible higher education". This is important in order to ensure that "the expansion of higher education is accompanied by a real democratisation of HE participation" (ESU 2009: 19). The ESU also notes that inclusive higher education must not be considered only with respect to the individual benefits, but also societal benefits (ESU 2009: 19).

Considering the reflection of diversity, the ESU lists underrepresented groups as people "from a lower social-economical background, ethnic-cultural minorities, migrant children, students from less economically developed regions, students with disabilities, gender, LGBT students, students with jobs, students with children, students thirty-five years or older, [r]eligious minorities, refugees/asylum seekers/students without residence permit and those who have to leave higher education for some reason." (ESU 2010: 92). The ESU supports taking action for ensuring equal participation of these groups in higher education.

4.3.3.2. Operational Goals

Ensuring equal access to quality higher education independent of applicants' background is a fundamental concern for the ESU. This major concern is visible also in the Bologna Process context. In the "Bologna Students Joint Declaration" the ESU mentions "a model of quality education open to the largest number of students" (ESU 1999:1).

The ESU defines the social dimension in relation to the goals of the "equity in access" and "equal chances of completion of studies" (ESU 2003a, 2005a). In all ESU documents, ensuring free and equal access for all and avoiding any discrimination based other than academic grounds can be seen as primary goal. In this sense, any discrimination "on the basis of political conviction, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic standing or any disability students may have" is not acceptable (ESU 2007a). Increasing the participation rates of the typical age cohort is stated as a primary goal. This goal is perceived as the responsibility of governments, in terms of regulations and funding (ESU 2001b: 1). During the interview, an ESU representative criticised the perception of widening participation as a goal of lifelong learning. Accordingly, the primary aim should be increasing the participation of the typical age cohort, before focusing on the adult/mature learners (ESU2 interview 2009). The interviewee also mentioned the ESU recommendation for setting increasing participation rates in the EHEA by 2020 as a benchmark (ESU2 interview 2009).

Another operational goal defined by the ESU is ensuring the wellbeing of students, which is considered necessary for the completion of studies and becoming active citizens (ESU 2001b: 1). Accordingly, it is "not enough to widen access and participation to higher education, if no measures are in place to guarantee that the focus is also on "throughput" and "output." Dropout should be minimised and the groups graduating should be in the same proportion as those who started with higher education" (ESU 2006: 10).

4.3.3.3. Means

The ESU defines the means for the social dimension as all measures in higher education that promote equal opportunities (ESU 2007a). It defines these means in two phases: before higher education and during higher education. In the first phase the quality of secondary education and access mechanisms are emphasised (ESU 2001b: 1). The means during education mostly focus on ensuring student wellbeing through student services, finances, etc.

Admission Mechanisms

The ESU mentions the importance of non-discriminatory legislation to increase the access of people coming from underrepresented backgrounds (ESU 2005b, 2007b, 2009: 19). The ESU notes the fact that the existence of such legislation in most of the countries does not help to fight discrimination in higher education institutions. The applicability of such legislation, beyond its existence on paper, is mentioned as a need (ESU 2009: 34).

Concerning recognition regulations, the ESU points that without proper procedures it is not possible to achieve major Bologna Process goals, including increased access to higher education (ESU 2001b: 1, ESU 2010: 6). In this sense, the recognition of prior learning and qualifications frameworks are considered important in offering flexible access alternatives to adult learners and other traditionally disadvantaged groups. These measures are considered to support the social mobility of learners (ESU 2006: 9, 2007a, 2007b).

The ESU advocates free access to higher education without filters or obstacles (ESU1 interview 2009). It demands the elimination of "explicit selection mechanisms as *numeri clausi* and entrance exams" (ESU 2001b: 1). The selection mechanisms limiting access are criticised due to being "discriminatory according to socioeconomic background" (ESU 2006: 5). According to the ESU, assessment based only on academic results has the risk of carrying pre-higher education inequalities to higher education.

> "Under-representation already starts before tertiary education and good school results might not measure intelligence or merit, but just social background. Valuing extra-curricular activities might seem like a harmless thing to do, but it does not take into account that some applicants might not have had the chance to do such kind of activities. Applications should therefore always be contextualised, thus taking into account the context of the applicant. The goal is that institutions eliminate the privilege bias from their admission systems" (ESU 2006: 5).

Flexible Learning Paths

The ESU mentions the impact of curricular reforms and the development of more flexible programmes, as well as the use of ICT in learning on the widening access of people from non-traditional educational backgrounds (ESU 2003a). It also affirms that the student-centred learning arrangements are important means to increase the access of this group. Moreover, the definition of qualifications based on learning outcomes, together with the recognition of prior learning, is expected to support the completion of studies by avoiding repetitions of similar courses (ESU 2006: 9). The need for flexible curricula and modularisation are mentioned especially in relation to students with employment. Such flexibility arrangements are claimed to help students who cannot attend courses or exams to complete their studies (ESU 2009: 30).

Student Services

Student services are the central means advocated by the ESU. Student services are considered as the musts of achieving student wellbeing and hence supporting the progress and completion of studies. The ESU mentions two groups of services: financial and social support services. The provision of these services with a consideration of the special needs of underrepresented groups is also highlighted (ESU 2006: 6).

Guidance and Counselling

Considering the influence of potential students' and their parents' perceptions and expectations on access, the ESU recommends to ensure that students and their families receive sufficient information on higher education, the study programmes and the possibilities of financing their higher education studies (ESU 2006: 6). The ESU highlights that perceived high study costs and "the loss of possible income (while not studying), should not only be perceived as economical barriers." Lack of such guidance would especially discourage people from disadvantaged backgrounds (ESU 2006:8). Educational counselling is mentioned as a measure to reduce dropouts (ESU 2006: 11).

Financial Support

The ESU considers student finances as an important determinant of accessing to and completing higher education studies (ESU 2006, 2007a, 2007b). The ESU does not solely focus on student financial aid mechanisms (e.g., special discounts, grants, scholarships), but treats student finances as a larger concept that includes the availability and scope of financial aid, tuition fees, living costs and employment during studies.

The ESU perceives the provision of adequate funding for students and for higher education institutions as means to achieve equal access to higher education for all (ESIB 2001a: 1). The ESU recommends the calculation of financial aid for students based on living and study costs. The amount and coverage of loans and grants are considered determinant for participation in higher education, especially for people coming from lower income families (ESU 2007b: 11). Considering the forms of financial aid for students, the ESU clearly favours grants to other forms. Loan-based forms are considered especially problematic for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds (ESU 2003a, 2005a). Grants are recommended to be "generous, accessible and parent-independent" in a way to "ensure and promote equal access to higher education" (2006: 8, 2009: 20). The ESU (2007b: 11) recommends the provision of financial aid to support initiatives for widening access to socially disadvantaged groups and to cover all "expenses related to higher education".

The ESU suggests avoiding employment during studies to afford living, unless it is connected to the studies (ESU 2003a). The ESU argues that the insufficiency of financial aid for students and ever increasing fees, study and living costs oblige students to work. This situation is considered problematic due to hampering student wellbeing and making successful graduation difficult (ESU 2006: 9, 2009: 8). In this sense, the ESU strongly recommends the availability of sufficient loans and grants systems (ESU 2009: 18).

One of the means which is not mentioned in the ministerial documents, yet closely linked to achieving the increasing and widening participation goal by the ESU, is tuition fees. The ESU requests "education for all that is free of fees and charges and therefore genuinely accessible to all socio-economic groups" (ESU 2009:12). It argues that the goal of ensuring "high quality education for all" shall be "based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay" (ESU 2010: 92). Tuition fees and similar study related fees are considered as financial obstacles to access to higher education and the completion of studies, especially for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds (ESU 2006: 8, 2010: 93). The ESU also calls all Bologna Process countries to respect "the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states that 'Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, […], in particular by the progressive introduction of free education'" (ESU 2009: 20). Moreover, the ESU suggests researching on the impact of tuition fees on the participation of different groups and the provision of corresponding financial compensation (e.g., grants, payment easiness) for those groups (ESU 2006: 8, 2009: 19).

General Student Services

Student services such as accommodation, food, health care, cultural activities, transportation, sport facilities, study and student counselling and psychological support are mentioned to ensure student wellbeing (2003a, 2003b 2005a, 2005b, 2009: 20). These services are suggested to be designed to make higher education more accessible for all. They should also take into consideration special needs of students "with disabilities, linguistic minorities and people with parental responsibilities" (e.g., daytime child care), as well as academic services, e.g., computer facilities and libraries (ESU 2006: 9). These services are demanded to be widely available and easily accessible for students (ESU 2005c: 35).

Other Means

The ESU defined further means to achieve the social dimension goals as affirmative action and actions for enhancing a democratic culture in higher education. The ESU differentiates affirmative action from positive discrimination and defines it as official policies attempting to "achieve a more equitable representation of underrepresented groups; in the case of

higher education, typically through amendments to admissions practices, scholarships, and in relation to employment decisions to counter discrimination against those groups" (ESU 2006: 2). Affirmative action covers soft measures, such as "outreach programmes", as well as hard measures, such as "quotas or positive discrimination". Examples of outreach programmes are "visits to schools, summer programs". For the use of hard measures such as quotas, the ESU recommends a "pragmatic approach: they can be effective as a short-term policy" (ESU 2006: 5). The ESU points to diversity among academic staff as well as a non-discriminatory, communicative and inclusive culture in higher education institutions (e.g., non-biased text books, lecture language, etc.) also as important means to tackle underrepresentation (ESU 2006: 7).

4.3.3.4. Conclusion

The ESU pushed the social dimension into the Bologna Process and kept it as its utmost priority. As an interest organisation of students, its primary concerns are ensuring free access to higher education and the wellbeing of students. The social dimension can be seen as a reflection of these concerns on the Bologna Process context.

The ESU considers the social dimension as an overarching issue that should be taken into consideration in every action area of the Bologna Process, i.e., the social dimension of mobility, the inclusion of the social dimension in quality assessment systems, the consideration of student wellbeing in changing degree structures (e.g., if students are able to understand and succeed in the new structures, employability, etc.). While emphasising the social dimension as an overarching issue, it also demands concrete implementations and its being a priority area at the Bologna, national and institutional levels. To this aim, it makes very concrete suggestions on the development of a monitoring system for the social dimension that would include proper data collection, setting benchmarks and taking stock of them. However, as the discussion on the means section shows, the ESU's means suggestions for the social dimension are not widely supported by the other actors.

Considering the strategic goals of the social dimension, the ESU is clear and coherent. Despite different wordings of the goals from time to time, it has always pointed to the same direction: achieving participative equity. Considering the operational goals, the ESU defines achieving equal access for all and completion of studies. It underlines the need for taking special action for underrepresented groups in order to achieve these goals. Furthermore, it defines ensuring student wellbeing as a goal of its own, while other actors define it as a measure to take in order to ensure the progression and completion of studies. Considering the means, the ESU places the strongest emphasis on student finances, especially on the removal of tuition fees. However, these points are not taken up in the ministerial level documents. The means that are claimed to increase flexibility mostly targeted at supporting progression of studies for non-traditional students.

4.3.4. The Education International

Since May 2005, the EI has been a member of the Social Dimension and Mobility Working Groups (Bologna Secretariat 2007:28). It is possible to observe general support of the EI for widening access and ensuring participative equity in higher education, as well as higher education as a public good and public responsibility. This principle level support is observable in all EI documents (cf. EI 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2010). Even though not elaborated, the EI has a different interpretation of the access goal of the social dimension. Accordingly,

access "to the academic profession, improved tenure, social security benefits and pensions and the possibility of making these portable" shall be ensured (EI 2010: 3). Considering the EI's active opposition to the GATS, the only means related suggestion can be concluded as its opposition to the application of tuition fees. The EI has a close standing to the ESU. In 2010, an agreement is made with the ESU in order to cooperate on certain common policy areas, including the social dimension. It can be concluded that the EI has not paid a special attention to the social dimension; yet has a principle level support based on its organisational missions, i.e., advocacy for free education and fighting against the commodification of higher education.

4.3.5. The European Association of Higher Education Institutions

The EURASHE mentioned the social dimension as an issue firstly in its 2003 Policy Statement (Zgaga 2003: 23, EURASHE 2003). In its Vilnius Statement for the Bergen ministerial meeting (2005), the EURASHE mentioned the social dimension as an action line and stated its willingness to take part in its monitoring process. In this document, the social dimension is considered in a broader sense to cover "all aspects of the social environment and relevance of education" and the inclusion of all stakeholders in higher education governance (EURASHE 2005: 5). In 2007 contribution to the Bologna Process, the EURASHE included "fair access to and wider participation in higher education" as one of the guiding principles without a specific reference to the social dimension (Bologna Secretariat 2007: 31). In 2009, the social dimension is mentioned as an inherent part of the EHEA (EURASHE 2009) and in 2010, as the first of EURASHE's 10 commitments (EURASHE 2010).

4.3.5.1. Operational Goals

Regarding operational goals, the EURASHE clearly states its support for increasing access to higher education, which would require widening access. In 2005 this goal is stated in relation to the Lisbon Strategy objective that "50 % of the young should have completed higher education" (EURASHE 2005: 4). Specifically on the social dimension, it states the goals of "equal access, progress and completion of higher education" (EURASHE 2005: 5). In its 2009 contribution, the EURASHE keeps its emphasis on widening access, this time not only to non-traditional learners but also to "students with foreign qualifications, and from lower socio-economic income groups" (EURASHE 2009: 4). In 2010, the EURASHE confirmed this goal as ensuring that "the individual learner can attain the highest level of education that is in line with her or his capacities, skills and desires, and regardless of the socio-economic, cultural or national background" (EURASHE 2010: 2).

4.3.5.2. Means

The EURASHE mentions the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning and the provision of flexible learning paths (i.e., part-time, continuing and second chance education and short cycle degrees), later on these means are interpreted in relation to lifelong learning (Bologna Secretariat 2007: 30, EURASHE 2009: 4). In addition to this, adequate funding for higher education institutions, especially for the vocational sector, is suggested. The EURASHE underlines this point, stating that the higher education institutions which have adjusted their structures and study programmes to include wider groups of society shall be getting corresponding financial support for these actions. Student-centred learning and the adjustment of legal frameworks are also mentioned to ensure equitable access (EURASHE 2010).

4.3.5.3. Conclusion

The EURASHE pays continuous attention to the social dimension issues in its policy papers. In general, the social dimension understanding of the EURASHE focuses on the goal of increasing access and widening access as a way to achieve it. The EURASHE defines the widening access goal more in relation to lifelong learning than to the social dimension. In this sense, the strategic goal of participative equity does not find place in EURASHE documents, but it is possible to conclude a compliance with the maximising knowledge and skills goal. The arguments supporting the social dimension request more institutional funding. This demand is mainly based on the argument that the vocational sector of higher education is more effective in including underrepresented groups and hence shall be supported more. In relation to the means, the EURASHE proposes concrete suggestions, which from time to time are defined in the lifelong learning context and from time to time in the social dimension context. However, it is not possible to observe any advocacy or concrete contribution of the EURASHE to the development of the social dimension.

4.3.6. The European University Association

The EUA mostly acts on the structural elements of the Bologna Process; in this sense, the social dimension received rather low attention. Most of the EUA documents produced in relation to the Bologna Process in 1999-2005 either do not mention the social dimension at all (cf. The Trends I and II Reports, the Salamanca Declaration) or include it as an aspect of other action areas, e.g., mobility, degree structures, lifelong learning (the Trends III and IV Reports, the Graz Declaration 2003). In its 2005 Glasgow Declaration, the EUA mentions the social dimension as a fundamental commitment, but only in relation to the higher education as a public responsibility issue and ensuring funding for higher education institutions for the successful implementation of the reforms (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 53). The Trends IV (2005) and V (2007) Reports discuss many of the social dimension relevant issues (mostly on student services to support the shift to student-centred learning and once in reference to the situation of doctoral candidates) without any explicit reference to it. In the 2007 Lisbon Declaration, the EUA affirmed its commitment to the social dimension (EUA 2007: 2). The Trends 2010 Report includes "the 'social dimension' (equity and access) of higher education as central" to the Bologna Process agenda (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 15). This reference is remarkable in the Trends reports, because they barely mentioned it before. While the EUA does not have a statement on the role of the social dimension, the importance of and the need for research and data collection on the socio-economic conditions of students concerning follow-up are mentioned (cf. the Trends Reports and the 2005 annual report (EUA 2006: 36)).

The document analysis reveals that the social dimension is not a priority issue for the EUA. Indeed, it is even not possible to clarify the EUA's understanding of the social dimension. It is sometimes treated as an item of itself and sometimes as part of lifelong learning. In addition to this, a variety of terms are used referring to the social dimension, e.g. "social objective" (EUA 2007: 79, Crosier *et al*. 2007: 79), "social agenda" (Crosier *et al*. 2007: 67, Sursock & Smidt 2010: 32), which also illustrates this unclarity. The low status of the social dimension is also confirmed during the interview. According to the interviewee, the social dimension is a system level, overarching policy issue; whereas, the EUA deals with institutional level issues. Therefore, "the EUA does not have a policy position on it" (EUA interview 2009). Nevertheless, the EUA touches upon many issues of the social dimension in its reports, mostly as part of lifelong learning.

4.3.6.1. Strategic Goals

The EUA referred to maximising the potentials of individuals and ensuring social cohesion goals in various documents (EUA 2008a, Zgaga 2003: 22, Sursock & Smidt 2010: 28). In its Lisbon Declaration, the EUA defines "promoting social equity and an inclusive society" as universities' public responsibility (EUA 2007: 2). In addition to this, it mentions "increasing diversity of the student body" (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 69) as a goal, which is different than reflecting the diversity of populations to the student body. Diversifying the student body does not necessarily aim at a good representation of all underrepresented groups in higher education. The EUA reports mostly do not mention underrepresented groups as the target group but rather focuses on non-traditional students (except EUA 2006 and EUA 2007). The inclusion of this group is considered to be important in meeting the challenges of ageing societies and the changing demands of the economy from the labour force under the pressures of globalisation. In this sense, this is a goal defined within the lifelong learning context rather than the social dimension context. While the emphasis exists in such a way in the report, the survey that the report is based on defines "diversified students" as students with disabilities, socio-economically disadvantaged students, ethnic minority groups and immigrants, students without formal qualifications, mature students (25+), part-time students and senior citizens (60+) (Sursock and Smidt 2010: 70).

4.3.6.2. Operational Goals

It is possible to come across access related goals in the EUA documents; yet it is not possible to conclude a clear access understanding of the EUA. The widening access goal is mentioned frequently by the EUA (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 40, Tauch & Reichert 2005: 19, EUA 2006: 36, EUA 2007: 2, Crosier *et al.* 2007: 79). The Trends III Report (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 40) includes it with an emphasis on increasing access rates. The Trends IV Report discusses "making higher education equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity" as an issue of degree structures (Tauch & Reichert 2005: 19).

The Trends V Report mentions the goal of "ensuring equality of access to higher education for all those qualified and able to benefit from it" (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 79). This goal definition restricts access to only the ones who "are able to benefit from it", unlike the general definition of ensuring equal access for all and specifically for underrepresented groups. This criterion is rather vague and open to interpretation. The definition of the "ability to benefit" is crucial, yet left unattended in the report. The Trends V Report mentions widening access as "a central element of the lifelong learning agenda" (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 62). It also mentions equal access with respect to the third cycle as an equally important issue of the social dimension, in addition to the first and second cycles (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 31).

The EUA mentions the increasing access goal as a future priority for the Bologna Process (EUA 2008b: 2). This goal is quantified as "ensuring that at least 50% of each age cohort has access to high education". The Trends 2010 Report includes widening and increasing access (sometimes participation) as "lifelong access to learning" (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 94). The Trend 2010 Report mentions access as a complex issue (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 71):

> "Access is a term that covers multiple issues such as physical accessibility of the institution for students with limited mobility, the availability of higher education regionally, whether primary and secondary education (also) promote widening access, and last but not least a system for student recruitment (or selection) that is able to identify potential students from a variety of backgrounds."

Other operational goals of the social dimension did not find much place in the EUA documents. In its Prague Declaration (2009: 6), the EUA states its commitment to the goals of "widening opportunities for participation in and successful completion of higher education" under lifelong learning. The Trends 2010 report suggests the diversification of the student body through "improving access and retention and creating the appropriate conditions" (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 69).

4.3.6.3. Means

The social dimension relevant means are mainly defined in relation to lifelong learning (EUA interview 2009). The EUA occasionally mentions the social dimension relevant means as access and admission requirements, financial support for students (Haug & Kirstein 1999, Haug & Tauch 2001), flexibility in access, tuition fees, obstacles to mobility and social and academic counselling (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 25), the "flexibility of learning paths, recognition of informal learning, customising the educational offer etc." and institutional diversity (EUA 2008: 2, Sursock & Smidt 2010: 95).

Admission Mechanisms

The flexibility of admission requirements to ensure wider access to higher education is mentioned as an important means and the governments are called for taking legal action in this sense (EUA 2006: 36, Sursock & Smidt 2010: 72). All Trends reports advocate the recognition of prior formal, non-formal and informal learning to widen access to higher education in the lifelong learning context. The promotion of the recognition of prior learning through qualifications frameworks is suggested. To this aim, qualifications frameworks shall be based on learning outcomes and student workload in order to be able to recognize non-formal and informal work-based learning (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 91, Tauch & Reichert 2005: 25, Crosier *et al.* 2007: 40, Sursock & Smidt 2010: 58). The Trends 2010 Report mentions the advantage of this approach as being independent of inputs and of the context of learning (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 65).

Concerning admission criteria, the EUA states the importance of institutional autonomy in defining the selection mechanisms (Lourtie 2001: 28). Accordingly, the universities should be autonomous in selecting their students based on their institutional concerns on profile, quality and competitiveness (Tauch & Reichert 2005: 19). The Trends 2010 Report also advocates institutional autonomy to promote diversity in the selection processes. The report mentions that centralised admission systems might disable higher education institutions to identify candidates in need of "encouragement and support" (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 71).

Flexible Learning Paths

The EUA relates the flexible learning paths to enhancing "the provision of education to a diverse population" (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 69) and shortening study periods (especially for part-time and double degree students) which is considered important for avoiding the burden of longer studies on the public purse (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 51). Flexible learning paths are further supported for better meeting the students' interests and mobility (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 58).

In its Salamanca Declaration (2001), the EUA mentions curricular reforms and the flexibility of entry and exit points as measures for the flexibility of studies. Some flexible provisions are listed as the provision of "junior" courses "that prepare or motivate young people to take an interest in higher education" and "senior" courses for adult learners to promote self development, part-time and open university courses (Crotier *et al*. 2007: 65), "the

accreditation of work placements, blended learning, company in-house training, distance education, e-learning, and learning through work schemes" (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 68).

The EUA also advocates the use of the ECTS for promoting flexibility. The use of the ECTS is stated to promote the recognition of prior learning and individual learning paths and to allow greater student choice (Zgaga 2003: 83, Sursock & Smidt 2010: 54). The use of the ECTS, when it is linked to student workload, is advocated for completing studies in time by informing the students about the workload and bringing more flexibility when applied in modularised structures (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 69). The application of the learning outcomes based approach in defining the ECTS, curricula and modules (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 67), as well as in qualifications frameworks (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 65) is supported to promote flexibility.

In addition to this, a big emphasis is placed on student-centred learning (Crosier *et al.* 2007). This focus becomes clearest in the Trends 2010 Report with the emphasis on it as a facilitator of "mobility, internationalisation and the competitiveness of the EHEA, creating institutional quality cultures and enhancing widening participation and lifelong learning" (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 31). Student-centred learning is expected to increase the flexibility and transparency of educational structures which in turn shall widen access, as well as enhancing lifelong learning opportunities, of those who "do not want, or are not able for personal or economic reasons, to follow the traditional route in higher education"(Sursock & Smidt 2010: 66).

Student Services

The EUA supports the provision of student services, specifically of financial aid and guidance and counselling services (Tauch & Reichert 2003, Tauch & Reichert 2005, Crosier *et al*. 2007, EUA 2007) for "widening access, improving completion rates and in preparing students for the labour market" (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 54). The Trends 2010 Report adds their importance for people with work or family obligations (Sursock & Smidt 2010).

Guidance and Counselling

The EUA states that guidance and counselling is needed due to the shift towards student-centred learning and changes in curricula. Accordingly, students would "need more guidance and counselling to find their individual academic pathways in a more flexible learning environment" (Tauch & Reichert 2005: 20). Guidance and counselling services are expected to assist students to understand and benefit better from the reforms of the Bologna Process, e.g., "degree structures, study programmes, teaching and learning methodologies", as well as the range of academic choices and progression routes (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 48). These services can include information on study opportunities in other institutions, academic orientation services, language training and career guidance services (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 49). The Trends 2010 Report adds ensuring "proper communication, in cooperation with institutions, to potential students through national information points" on the possibilities of "student financial support, access, recognition of prior learning, etc." (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 87) and the importance of "individualised support services to ensure that students from disadvantaged social groups do not drop out" (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 71).

Financial Support

The financial aid for students is considered important for wider access and the completion of studies (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 40). The prolongation of study periods, e.g., due to employment during studies, is considered problematic due to the burden it places on the

public purse (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 52). As a solution alternative, however, the EUA suggests increasing the flexibility of programmes to address this group of students instead of a financial aid alternative (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 52). In relation to the importance of financial support to access to higher education, the report draws attention to the third cycle. The Trends V Report states that many students will have considerable debts in the end of their first two cycles which could become an obstacle to access the third cycle. One of the criteria would become "the ability of candidates to afford a further period of study with little income" (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 31). Here the report clearly shows an understanding of the social dimension with respect to the influence of socio-economic conditions of people in access to higher education, but this is considered only for the last cycle which gets more and more important for knowledge economies, whereas the main inequalities exist already in access to the first cycle.

General Student Services

Further student services are listed as "career services, accommodation, psychological counselling and welfare services" (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 48), "academic orientation, sports facilities, information on study opportunities, language training, and social and cultural activities", health services, legal advice, etc. (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 82, 87).These services are considered important for increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA by supporting both national and international students with better opportunities to achieve themselves (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 48). The Trends V Report also briefly mentions the importance of these services especially for the access of underrepresented groups (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 49). The Trends 2010 Report emphasises its importance for employability. Accordingly, students sufficiently supported with such student services, would be more successful which would make them more employable (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 82).

The provision of services and feedback from the users on the quality of the service are suggested in line with the change of understanding towards student-centred learning (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 48). In this context, student services appear to be useful for improving the quality of the service and consumer satisfaction rather than encouraging participation and supporting completion.

Other Means

The EUA suggests further means to increase and widen access. The Trends 2010 Report (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 71) touches upon the importance of the secondary school system in recruiting potential students and the availability of support at this level, especially for non-traditional groups. In addition to this, the EUA emphasises the need for institutional diversity in order to be able to address the diverse needs of a diverse student body. The promotion of diverse institutional profiles, missions and offers is advocated to be able to be more inclusive without jeopardising the quality (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 95). In this respect, the EUA also mentions the importance of financial support for universities which is discussed in higher education as a public responsibility Chapter 4.5.1.

4.3.6.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the interview and document analysis shows that the social dimension has not been a priority area for the EUA. Despite not totally neglecting, the EUA contributes to the ambiguity of the social dimension by bringing up different terms and conceptualisations, such as the diversified student body, broadening access and the social objective. The chief concerns for the EUA in the Bologna context can be listed as increasing the competitiveness of universities, e.g., by promoting excellence and quality, and ensuring the employability of

graduates. The EUA focuses on widening access as a goal but only for non-traditional students. In addition to this, as an interest group organisation, a primary concern for the EUA has been to increase the resources of universities. Therefore, it puts forward its demands for autonomy and funding and occasionally relates them to social dimension elements, such as funding to meet the needs of diverse student groups or institutional admission for more responsiveness. It is difficult to relate these to the strategic goals of the social dimension, especially with the reflecting diversity goal. It is not possible to find strategic goals of the social dimension explicitly stated in the social dimension understanding of the EUA. The defined means in relation to student services are more oriented to user/consumer satisfaction than ensuring social cohesion or more specifically equity in higher education participation.

4.3.7. Other Actors

The UNESCO, the BUSINESSEUROPE and the ENQA have not paid any attention to the social dimension.

4.4. Relating the Social Dimension to the Bologna Process

As the chapter aims at defining the social dimension, a vague phenomenon of the Bologna Process, it is necessary to discuss its relationships with other action areas. The previous sections provide the core elements of the social dimension; this section presents its (un)common elements with other action areas. The section interrogates the relationship between the social dimension and the other action areas. By this means, it illustrates the (un)embeddedness of the social dimension in the Bologna Process.

The social dimension appeared in the documents as an unconnected item. This situation started to change after 2003, with the definition of a balancing role which is expected to contribute to the competitiveness and attractiveness of the EHEA while balancing the emphasis on the economic role of higher education. This role of the social dimension creates one of its strongest links with the rest of the Bologna Process and at the same time a controversial aspect of it. On the one hand, the social dimension is claimed to support competitiveness through supporting sustainable economic growth. The strategic goal of maximising the potentials of individuals is in line with this approach. Furthermore, achieving social cohesion is considered as "a necessary precondition" for sustainable economic development in the long run (Stastna 2005: 1). This point is also mentioned in the "Equality in a Knowledge-based Society – How to Widen Opportunities" seminar (2008). According to it, a more highly qualified labour force - through widening and hence increasing access- would ensure sustainable economic growth:

> "A good quality human resource is a key prerequisite of every competitive economy and taking into consideration the labour market situation of most European countries, considerable additional labour force capacity can be leveraged by providing learning and upskilling opportunities for those from disadvantaged groups. We believe that competitiveness, excellence and solidarity are not contradictory, but mutually reinforcing." (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 12).

Accordingly, ensuring the completion of studies is needed to ensure sustainable and quicker labour supply for the economy. The EC emphasises its importance with the low unemployment rates among higher education graduates (cf. COM 58 2003). In this logic, increasing higher education graduation rates equals to increasing employment rates. Therefore, increasing access to higher education is essential. Higher enrolment rates are considered minimum requirements for higher employment rates. In the international

Bologna seminars in 2005 and 2008, the participants underline this link. They do not limit the social dimension goals with higher education and add ensuring the "smooth transition into the labour market", as well (cf. Statsna 2005: 5, Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 12).

On the other hand, the social dimension is expected to balance the economic emphasis with its emphasis on the social characteristics of higher education. However, this role is difficult to clarify: what are the social characteristics of higher education? None of the official or semi-official documents give further explanation on it. The EUA also points to the conflict between social inclusion (within the lifelong learning context) and economic competitiveness:

> "While social inclusion stresses flexible access and diversity of criteria for different learner profiles [...], the competitiveness agenda tends to focus on excellence and efficiency in the updating of knowledge and skills. Here, knowledge often plays the opposite role of reducing exclusion and stratification in and between societies. If the competitiveness agenda is reinforced by tight national budgets, university provision of lifelong learning may well be forced to let go of its social inclusion agenda." (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 93)

This argument continues with the consideration of universities more and more as private enterprises which have to seek for higher profit, reputation and consumer satisfaction. The Trends V Report states that widening participation is not a major concern for many higher education institutions. According to the report, funding criteria are more and more based on measurable "academic quality" which compels universities to exclusiveness (i.e., taking action to get the best students to become more competitive, rather than diversifying the student body) (Crosier *et al*. 2007: 67). In relation to this tension the ESU recommends the protection of social benefit systems. "Cooperation rather than competition should be the guiding principle for the enhancement of student well-being and good practices" (ESU 2001b:1).

Further relations of the social dimension with other action areas are mainly in the form of confusions: the inclusion of the social dimension as part of another action area. This can also be read as the interpretation of the social dimension as an overarching area that reflects on all action areas. The following sections discuss these relationships with respect to each action area.

As mentioned above, the commonality of means and difficulty of making clear-cut separation of them according to the action areas suggest that there is not a risk of conflict in that respect.

4.4.1. The Degree Structure

Concerning the change of degree structures, ensuring access to the next cycle is mentioned as a goal in relation to the social dimension in some of the documents. The Berlin Communiqué (2003) states that first cycle degree holders should have access to second cycle programmes and second cycle degree holders to doctoral studies. The participants of the "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-wide Competition" seminar name this as "vertical mobility" (Stastna 2005: 4). The social dimension, specifically admission regulations, is considered as a matter of concern in order to ensure access from one cycle to another for everyone. Such an access definition is primarily defined as a goal in order to ensure a smooth functioning of the new degree structures. In this sense, it is a degree structure goal rather than a social dimension goal. "Vertical mobility" is not mentioned in relation to the social dimension in other documents.

4.4.2. Mobility

The social dimension is often related to the mobility action area as a social or non-structural aspect of mobility. In the Prague meeting (2001), the ministers mentioned "the social dimension of mobility" and called for a follow-up seminar to explore "the social dimension with a specific attention to obstacles to mobility". In the Berlin meeting (2003), they mentioned "the portability of national loans and grants" in this respect.

The participants of the "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" seminar (2003) referred to the Prague Communiqué and mentioned the importance of social issues in promoting mobility (Neetens 2003: 4). Accordingly, they recommended the provision of information on mobility opportunities, the portability of student financial aid, ensuring equal access to student services for mobile students, "specific measures to improve the participation of disadvantaged social groups, especially students originating from the lower socio-economic strata, to student mobility, solidarity in the EHEA to fight the current disparity between European countries which very often hinders student mobility", e.g., encouraging the support of wealthier countries for less wealthy countries (ibid.). In this document, the means to promote mobility are included as part of the social dimension action area. Similarly, the participants of the "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-wide Competition" seminar (2005) discussed the social dimension of mobility focusing on the social solidarity *versus* competition discussion. It is argued that in "the poorer countries [which] cannot afford to support mobility of their students" only the students from higher economic backgrounds can be mobile. The addition of the competition element to attract fee paying or "best" students brings the "fear of brain drain" to these countries (Stastna 2005: 4). In this context, the participants recommended the ministers to recognise the structural and legislative obstacles of mobility (i.e., immigration, social security, visa, etc.) and "to undertake actions to create a socially cohesive system of student grants (including mobility grants)", they called the BFUG to undertake a study on these issues and the national authorities "to ease the visa procedures for foreign students and scholars" (Stastna 2005:6). In a similar way, the BFUG-WG report (2007), which is written with a mobility prism, defines the social dimension of mobility in relation to accessing study and training opportunities abroad, overcoming obstacles to mobility, e.g., visa, residence, work permit, pension arrangements, the "recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context" (BFUG-WG 2007: 13) and the portability of loans and grants. The participants of the "Equality in a Knowledge-based Society – How to Widen Opportunities" seminar defined the promotion of "equal chance in international mobility during the studies" in relation to the social dimension. The link is explained with "the cost barrier of mobility" for students from lower social-economic backgrounds (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 12). The underlining idea is to ensure "equal mobility opportunities" for all independent of socio-economic background.

The EUA mentions the social dimension as an aspect of mobility with respect to the removal of obstacles to mobility for all and increasing the mobility of underrepresented groups. Concerning the general obstacles, it mentions legislative issues, such as the portability of grants and loans, the improvement of regulations on health care, social services and work permits (EUA 2003: 8). For underrepresented groups it mentions the removal of obstacles, e.g., extra costs, academic recognition, language, part-time work positions, family obligations (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 29). The ESU also mentions (2001b:2) the need to consider the "social dimensions of mobility" to avoid reproducing social inequalities and the necessity to remove "social, economical and political obstacles" to mobility. The ESU defines ensuring free and

equal access to mobility as the social dimension of mobility (ESU 2003a) and recommends the portability of student financial aid in order "to enhance mobility" independent of parental income (ESU 2003a, 2005a).

The social dimension and mobility are linked with regard to the goal of ensuring equal opportunities during higher education studies. The need to remove legal and financial obstacles to mobility is often mentioned as the social dimension of mobility. The experience gained with mobility is assumed to increase mobile students' life chances. In the context of this research, these elements are not considered as part of the social dimension, but rather as a strong link between the social dimension and mobility action areas. This decision is based on the goals of the social dimension, which especially after 2007, focused on participative equity, rather than having a focus on access to certain programmes during studies. While access to study opportunities is a concern for the social dimension, access to training opportunities and social rights of the mobile academic and administrative staff are not mentioned in any other report. Furthermore, mobility in the Bologna Process context is not limited to students, but also covers academic and administrative staff, which is not a matter of concern for the social dimension at all.

4.4.3. Lifelong Learning

The social dimension has the most commonalities with the lifelong learning action area. These commonalities are based on the overlapping target groups, goals and means. The lifelong learning action area has a focus on widening access to higher education for people without formal qualifications and for adult learners (people at older ages and/or with employment). The social dimension includes these groups as two of the several underrepresented groups in higher education. Having a common target group makes many means common as well.

As for the goals, in the Prague meeting (2001), the ministers stated the importance of lifelong learning to "improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life" and in the Berlin Communiqué (2003), "the need to improve opportunities for all citizens, in accordance with their aspirations and abilities" in this context. All these goals are also defined for the social dimension. For instance, the BFUG-WG (2007: 13) defines improving "[o]pportunities for all citizens, in accordance with their aspirations and abilities, to follow the lifelong learning paths into and within higher education" as part of the social dimension. This interpretation, indeed, perceives lifelong learning as part of the social dimension rather than a linked action area. In the Leuven Communiqué (2007), widening participation is defined explicitly for both action areas. Widening participation as a way of increasing participation is considered as a common goal. The participants of the "Equality in a Knowledge-based Society – How to Widen Opportunities" seminar stated that lifelong learning is a means for "promoting equity and active citizenship" (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 3).

The ESU also points to the commonalities between the social dimension and lifelong learning goals, i.e., achieving social cohesion and ensuring equal opportunities (ESU 2010: 83). The EUA points to the confusion of the lifelong learning and social dimension definitions. It states that there is a conceptual misunderstanding of lifelong learning and explains it with the confused use of the term "both to cover continuing education and training for well-qualified graduates and initial education for disadvantaged groups..." (Crosier *et al.* 2007: 62) Even though the Trends V Report does not state explicitly which one is the right explanation for lifelong learning, it is alluded as the former one.

It is possible to observe a tendency to perceive the social dimension as part of lifelong learning. However, they are different from each other due to the differences of their target groups. The social dimension focuses on all underrepresented groups and their participation in higher education and this is directly related to its strategic goal of achieving participative equity. Lifelong learning focuses on non-traditional learners mainly with the goal of updating skills and knowledge in the society. Moreover, even though it does not have a strong position in the social dimension action area as well, the completion of studies is not mentioned as a goal in the lifelong learning context at all.

4.4.4. Quality Assurance

The social dimension and quality assurance relationship is discussed based on the impact of increasing student numbers and diversifying student body on the quality of higher education and on the role of the social dimension in supporting the goal of quality enhancement. There are different views on this relationship. In the "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" seminar (2003), the participants pointed that "[u]nder conditions of wide access to higher education, the need for quality and accountability becomes predominant, and should be realised through the establishment of appropriate quality assurance procedures". This is also related to the allocation of public funding and the efficient use of resources (Zgaga 2003: 79). This argument points to the traditional tension of quality versus quantity. In this reference, the social dimension goals are hinted to conflict with the quality goals of the Bologna Process and quality assurance mechanisms are considered as precautions against possible negative impacts of the social dimension. Differently, the participants of the "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-wide Competition" seminar pointed to the importance of the social dimension for enhancing quality. The participants stated that the social dimension is as important as the quality assurance guidelines for quality improvement (Stastna 2005: 3). The inclusion of the social dimension in internal and external evaluation "in all aspects dealing with living and studying conditions" is recommended (Stastna 2005: 6). According to this argument, the social dimension can be integrated in quality assurance criteria and support quality enhancement. A further suggestion is made by the participants of the "Equality in a Knowledge-based Society – How to Widen Opportunities" seminar (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 13). They stated that the diversity of the student body and excellence shall not be seen as contradictory; instead increased diversity of staff and students shall be considered as "an added value of European higher education" (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 9). In this view quality and excellence are not clearly differentiated. According to this argument, the social dimension and quality areas or widening participation and enhancing quality naturally support each other. There is no risk of a tension.

The EUA recognises a reflection of the traditional "quantity versus quality" tension on the two action areas and touches upon the concerns on quality "in conditions of widened access" (Tauch &Reichert 2003: 40). The Trends V Report, based on empirical information gathered from site visits, states that the diversification of the student body is often equalised with lowering the quality of higher education. The report points to the tension between different perceptions of quality criteria, i.e., responding to the diverse needs of citizens versus academic quality, and suggest a revision of the criteria as a way to ease the tension:

> "If widening participation is to be a goal for higher education institutions, action will need to be taken on matters such as career structures, so that not only excellent research is rewarded in academic careers, but also excellent teaching, and student success. Such debates are yet to take place in many institutions and countries, but unless they do, it is

> difficult to see why individuals and institutions would alter their behaviour." (Crosier et al. 2007: 67)

The ESU has a perspective considering that quality assurance and social dimension areas support each other. It defines enhancing quality of education as a common goal for these two areas. The ESU argues that widening participation when supported with right measures "will provide better quality for all" (ESU 2006: 4). And enhancing quality would support the goal of ensuring the completion of studies. It suggests decreasing dropout rates as a common indicator for both areas. The ESU suggests enhancing quality by utilising "appropriate teaching methods", benchmarking average workload in designing modules, "eliminating certain cultural barriers, like unnecessary academic language and discriminating reference points", as well as "[s]maller classes and in general a student-centred approach" and the "provision of educational counselling" (ESU 2006: 10). Moreover, the ESU suggests the inclusion of the social dimension, especially student services, in the quality assessment of higher education (ESU 2005b: 40).

Unlike other action areas, in which the discussion is based on confusion of the social dimension with others, for the social dimension and quality assurance areas, the discussion is based on conflict, i.e., whether they support or hinder each other. Traditionally, the increasing number of students and their diversifying profile raise concerns on the quality of higher education, i.e., quality vs. quantity argument. These two are considered to conflict with each other. References on the quality assurance-social dimension relationship are mostly addressing this traditional tension in between. The actors commonly argue against the conventional argument of higher quantity lowers quality. They indicate a harmonious coexistence of these two areas. According to some the quality assurance mechanisms can enable their coexistence by preventing the tension and according to some other these two areas automatically support the improvement of each other. According to it, increasing the quality of student experience is expected to contribute to the quality of higher education and even to support achieving excellence in higher education. Yet, it shall be noted that this enthusiastic claim for inclusion and excellence coherency seems to be paradoxical. Excellence by definition cannot be achieved by all. It needs top level institutions, students and other outputs which cannot happen without the existence of a lower level.

4.5. Surroundings of the Social Dimension

As mentioned above, the social dimension has a cumulative progression. In this process some new items are added to its definition, some others are detached. The following features are temporarily attached to the social dimension. It is possible neither to include them within a social dimension definition, nor to neglect. These items are categorised as the surroundings of the social dimension: the higher education as a public good and public responsibility understanding and student involvement in higher education governance. Both of these issues are initially related to the social dimension and considered afterwards as principle level issues or as general Bologna Process aims.

4.5.1. Higher Education as a Public Good and Public Responsibility

As Table 4.6 shows, the social dimension and higher education as a public good and public responsibility have an unsteady relationship. Please see Box 1 for a brief discussion on higher education as a public good.

Table 4.6 Relationship of the Higher Education as a Public Good and Public Responsibility Understanding and the Social Dimension

Social Dimension	Prague 2001	Berlin 2003	Bergen 2005	London 2007	Leuven 2009	Budapest 2010
Public good	√	√				
Public responsibility	√	√			√	√

Source: Extracted from the ministerial communiqués and declarations (2001-2010)

The issue of higher education as a public good and public responsibility is introduced to the Bologna Process agenda by students together with the social dimension. In 2001, the ESU discussed higher education as a public good based on the inclusion of higher education in the GATS negotiations. The ESU claims that higher education is a human right and as such cannot be traded (ESU 2001b). The 2001 General Report points to the tension between higher education as a market or state responsibility within the context of the private provision of transnational higher education (Lourtie 2001: 14).

In the Prague Communiqué (2001), like the social dimension, higher education as a public good and public responsibility is mentioned under the title of "Further Actions Following the Six Objectives of the Bologna Process". The ministers state that "higher education should be considered as a public good and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.)" (2001).

The participants of the "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" seminar discussed higher education as a public good in relation to its "political ideological meaning", rather than the economic meaning and considered it as "a fundamental human right and a public service"; hence a public responsibility, i.e., "responsibility to regulate higher education" (Neetens 2003: 6). The participants defined ensuring equal access, the provision and funding of higher education and quality assurance as part of public responsibility, in a way suggesting the public responsibility as the operational part of the public good understanding. In this context, the provision of student services is considered as part of the responsibility of governments and higher education institutions (Neetens 2003: 4). The provision of student services is further discussed in relation to their importance for achieving social cohesion and equity. In this sense, it has a high correspondence with the social dimension. The participants also discussed the inclusion of higher education in the GATS. The 2003 General Report also discusses the inclusion of higher education in the GATS and refers to the students' claims that education is a non-tradable product due to being a human right and that students are not consumers (Zgaga 2003: 24). The report also mentions the UNESCO's First Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (2002) where the participants mentioned ensuring equal "access to quality higher education for all on the basis of merit as a human right, and of education remaining a 'public good'". They also mentioned the need to clarify the meaning of public good (Zgaga 2003: 40).

In the preamble of the Berlin Communiqué (2003), higher education as a public good and responsibility is reaffirmed, this time directly in relation to the social dimension. In the 2004 "Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research" seminar, the participants defined public responsibility as

> "a multidimensional concept that includes the establishment and maintenance of the required legal infrastructure, elaboration of policy, provision of funds and the further development of the social dimension, to meet current and future needs of the Knowledge Society." (Council of Europe 2004: 2)

The report further emphasises funding as part of public responsibility regarding the trends towards cost-sharing and its impact on the "equality of opportunity, system efficiency, social cohesion and public funding" (Council of Europe 2004: 3). The seminar participants considered higher education as a public good with larger connotations, in a way to cover all aspects of higher education and research that should be taken care of by public authorities. Specifically, achieving social cohesion and equity, ensuring equal access for all and the provision of financial aid for students are mentioned both for the social dimension and the higher education as a public good understanding (Council of Europe 2004).

The 2005 General Report discusses public responsibility - without the public good part of it- in relation to the national mandate on structural elements, such as degree structure, quality assurance and recognition (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 10). It defines the scope of this responsibility as national legislation. In the report, public responsibility is discussed as an overarching element, a principle of the Bologna Process. And as such it is related to achieving the goals of the social dimension together with "institutional autonomy, participation of students in higher education governance, cooperation and trust between the participating countries and organisations" (Bologna Secretariat 2005: 42). In the Bergen Communiqué (2005), the social dimension is defined without the public good and responsibility dimension. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to higher education as a public responsibility as a principle. The London Communiqué (2007) mentions neither public good nor public responsibility.

The international Bologna seminar on "Equality in a Knowledge-based Society - How to Widen Opportunities?" is organised in relation to the social dimension. The participants stated that "higher education is a public good and therefore a public responsibility" (Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008: 11). This recommendation is formulated with regards to the societal contributions of higher education, beyond personal advancements. Similar to the previous references, public responsibility is discussed in relation to the regulations and funding of higher education, ensuring equal access and the provision of financial aid for students.

The 2009 General Report refers to the traditional understanding of higher education as a public good "in which the social dimension is firmly embedded" (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 4). This report also discusses public good with a larger scope including governance and funding issues. Accordingly, higher education has economic and "social" roles such as "social equity, social mobility, social cohesion, citizenship, cultural engagement" which are considered as "various potential 'public goods' of higher education" (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 22). Public good and responsibility for higher education require ensuring equal opportunities for all. The report also recognises the market forces shaping higher education and research and sees the role of public authorities to ensure manifold goals of higher education (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 21). The 2009 General Report defines higher education as a public responsibility and a public good which supports building a knowledge-based, cohesive European society to meet the challenges of globalisation and demographic changes. The report defines the social and economic roles of higher education institutions in providing knowledge and qualified labour force, contributing to the "social and cultural vitality", pursuing excellence and hence increasing the attractiveness as a public

responsibility of higher education (Bologna Secretariat 2009: 27). The 2009 Stocktaking report considers public responsibility in terms of ensuring equal access for "learners of all ages to participate in relevant programmes" (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 17). This report discusses public responsibility in relation to lifelong learning rather than to the social dimension.

The Leuven Communiqué (2009) includes only higher education as a public responsibility. In the preamble, it is stated that the public investment in higher education is considered of utmost priority "to guarantee equitable access and further sustainable development of autonomous higher education institutions". This statement is related to the importance of higher education for the knowledge economy and the ongoing financial crisis. To wit, providing public funding for higher education institutions in order to ensure that they would be able to fulfil their tasks, "such as preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development; creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation" is considered as public responsibility (Leuven Communiqué 2009).

In a similar way, the Budapest-Vienna Declaration (2010) mentions public responsibility in relation to ensuring funding for higher education institutions, especially in days of financial crises. The ministers also included the social dimension in this section with reference to its role in supporting social and economic development. Even though, public responsibility is mentioned as an overarching principle, it is still somehow linked to the social dimension.

The Council of Europe has been the main advocate of the higher education as a public good and responsibility understanding in the Bologna Process context. It organised the international Bologna Seminar on the "Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research" (2004). Public responsibility was at the centre of the Council of Europe's message to the Bergen ministerial meeting. It is stated that "the exclusive public responsibility for the framework of higher education, such as legislation and degree systems, must be matched by strong public commitment to equal opportunities and to financing higher education and research" (Council of Europe 2005). In 2007, the Council of Europe published a recommendation on the public responsibility for higher education and research. In this document, public responsibility is defined in terms of the responsibility to legislate, "ensuring effective equal opportunities to higher education for all citizens" and financing higher education and research (Council of Europe 2007). The recommendations for action include the responsibility for "the legal framework; the degree structure or qualifications framework of the higher education system; the framework for quality assurance; the framework for the recognition of foreign qualifications; the framework for information on higher education provision" (Council of Europe 2007). Despite the commonality of the means, there is not any reference to the social dimension. In its message to the Leuven ministerial meeting, the Council of Europe mentioned public responsibility as one of its areas of focus among many in the Bologna Process context and highlighted it as an area of importance (Council of Europe 2009).

As mentioned above, the ESU introduced the issue into the Bologna Process agenda and shows its support for higher education as a public good and hence a public responsibility in many of its documents (cf. ESU 2001b, 2003a). In this context, the ESU states a clear opposition to the inclusion of higher education in GATS. However, it is not possible to observe a relation with the social dimension apart from the commonality of the goals in ensuring social cohesion and equal access to higher education. In this sense, even though the ESU supports the issue at a principle level, it did not work on its promotion.

Another contribution to the discussion comes from the EUA. In the Salamanca Convention of European Higher Education Institutions (2001), higher education as a public responsibility is stated as a European value which should be maintained. It is discussed in relation to ensuring wider and open access to higher education at all levels, personal development and citizenship education (Barblant & Fayant 2001: 7). The Trends III Report discusses the public good issue under the tensions of competition *versus* cooperation and economic *versus* public functions of higher education (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 39). The report also discusses public good as a matter of funding and higher education's inclusion in the GATS negotiations. In this report the social dimension and the public good understanding are used almost interchangeably; or, more accurately, the social dimension as the operationalisation of the public good understanding. The Trends 2010 Report discusses higher education as a public responsibility with respect to the funding of higher education. It specifically points to the difficulties of addressing the public interest under the trends favouring more market orientation (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 24). The EURASHE also mentioned higher education as a public good and "not exclusively a tradable commodity" as relevant principles in relation to the social dimension (EURASHE 2005: 5).

In conclusion, higher education as a public good and public responsibility has a close relationship with the social dimension at a principle level. The public responsibility is commonly perceived as the responsibility of public authorities to provide the legal and financial infrastructure for higher education. In the beginning, the social dimension and higher education as a public good and public responsibility are used almost interchangeably, especially as both issues were pushed into the agenda by the ESU. The public good and responsibility understanding occasionally intertwined with the social dimension in terms of the strategic goals (i.e., achieving social cohesion and equity) and operational goals (i.e., ensuring equal access opportunities). Later on, some interpreted the social dimension as the operational reflection of this understanding in the Bologna Process context and some interpreted them as separate issues. In the most recent version, the higher education as a public good and responsibility understanding has a larger scope than the social dimension covering funding and governance of higher education.

The way higher education as a public good and responsibility is mentioned in the Bologna Process has also changed in time. In the beginning, public good is included especially with reference to free higher education and as a principle level issue. But, afterwards, only higher education as a public responsibility is mentioned in relation to regulations and providing sufficient funding for higher education institutions. In the ministerial documents, public good and public responsibility are initially considered more as principle level issues, which are to be affirmed rather than to be implemented. The ESU claims that higher education is a human right, therefore a public good. The ESU raised these claims together with the social dimension and without differentiating them clearly from each other. This issue is traditionally important for the ESU and is occasionally introduced to the social dimension discussion. The EUA mentions public responsibility in relation to ensuring funding for higher education institutions for them to be able to carry out the expected social and economic tasks in times of financial crises, budget cuts, demands for excellence and increasing international competition. The Council of Europe interpreted public good and public responsibility as a larger version of the social dimension. It is the only actor that called for implementations in order to realise these principles.

BOX.1 Higher Education as a Public Good

Higher education is perceived as a public, private or mixed good with respect to its provision/provider, nature of outputs and beneficiaries.

Provision/provider

Traditionally, higher education is considered as a public good and responsibility in terms of finances, regulations and oversight. Accordingly, higher education is a right for every citizen and means to ensure social justice and coherence. Another interpretation bases on the funder. Accordingly, publicly funded higher education is a public good and privately funded higher education is a private good. Yet, such a definition has clear limitations. Firstly, both publicly and privately funded higher education produce public and private goods. Secondly, both types are subject to regulation and steering of the state (Brennan & Naidoo 2008: 297, Brennan *et al.* 2009: 151–152).

Nature of Outputs

Economists define public good as being non-rivalry, i.e., a good does not get less for others as it is consumed by one individual and non-exclusive, i.e., noone can be excluded from enjoying the benefits of that good. Such goods would not be attractive for private providers, since they are not profitable, and hence need to be produced publicly. There are also hybrid forms. These are defined as club and common goods (de Boer *et al.* 2009: 66). Club goods are exclusive and non-rivalry. For instance the consumption of cable television is limited, but it would not get less when it is used by others. Common goods are non-exclusive and rivalry. For instance fish are in the sea for consumption for all, but the consumption of one fish means less fish for others.

Teixeira (2009: 45) states that the goods and services provided by higher education are not non-rivalry and non-exclusive. Similarly de Boer *et al.* (2009: 66) consider higher education as a private good. Individuals can be excluded from its consumption by admission mechanisms (exclusive) and attention given to one student would mean less for the others (rivalry). The authors continue with a further definition (ibid.)

> "If one relaxes rivalry criterion, education can be regarded as a club good, after being selected ('not being excluded') a student 'joins the club' (his participation goes not at the expense of somebody else). It means that in principle education is a marketable commodity, as we widely observe in the real world of higher education."

In this definition, the difference "relaxation" makes on selection and exclusion is not clear. The selection mechanism is at the same time an exclusion mechanism and a student's participation goes at the expense of another in systems with *numerus clausus*.

Beneficiaries

Another definition of public good is based on the beneficiaries. It is possible to talk about public and private benefits of higher education. Private benefits of higher education are often referred as higher income, better life standards, etc.. Public benefits include equipping citizens with occupations which in turn supports the welfare of the whole society, enabling social mobility (even though that seems to be limited to the middle class), contributing to the development of culture and producing new technologies and knowledge. According to this view, whoever enjoys the benefits of higher education should pay for it, similar to the cost-sharing approach. Economists mention the benefits of higher education that go beyond the consumer of the good, such as its contribution to maximising social welfare. These benefits cannot be sufficiently exploited by the market. Therefore, due to the private and public benefits of higher education, it should be considered as a merit good. The consumption of this good can be promoted publicly due to its individual and social benefits, but it should be provided privately (Teixeira 2009: 46).

It is possible to conclude an agreement on the consideration of higher education as a mixed good, private good in the sense of facilitating to earn credentials which provide positional advantages and public good in the sense of "contributing to the creation of a more productive workforce and a successful national economy" (Brennan 2008: 383).

4.5.2. Student Involvement in Higher Education Governance

Student involvement in the governance of higher education is introduced into the Bologna Process agenda together with the social dimension in 2001. In the Prague Communiqué (2001), the ministers mentioned the importance of student participation together with the social dimension. It is mentioned as a vital component for the realisation of the EHEA. Students are recognised "as full members of the higher education community" (Prague Communiqué 2001).

In 2003, the seminar on "Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education" covers the involvement of students in the governance of higher education, i.e., "legislative, decision-making and system improvement". The seminar participants stated that "[g]overnance at any level on issues that directly and indirectly affect students cannot pass without the students input. Students are committed, participative, motivated and curious and this provides for valuable contributions" (Fontes 2003: 2). The participants discussed various mechanisms to ensure genuine student participation in higher education governance but without linking it to the social dimension. In a similar way, the Berlin (2003) and the Bergen (2005) Communiqués mention the necessity of active student participation in higher education governance in order to achieve the sustainability of the reforms. Students are reaffirmed as full partners in higher education governance. Legal measures and the identification of other possible ways for ensuring student participation are called for.

The BFUG-WG discussed student involvement directly in relation to the social dimension. It stated that students "are full partners in higher education governance and should participate in and influence the organisation and content of higher education" with reference to the commitments made in relation to the social dimension in the Prague and Berlin Communiqués (BFUG-WG 2007: 13). In order to improve student participation in the governance of higher education, the BFUG-WG recommended the following actions (2007: 16):

> • "Legislation or other measures to ensure student participation in higher education governance
> • Provisions for the existence of and exercise of influence by student organisations
> • Student evaluations of courses, programmes and institutions, including action plans and follow-up of actions taken"

In most of the stocktaking reports, student involvement is perceived as an element of quality assessment processes and is not related to the social dimension. In the 2007 Stocktaking Report, student involvement is also analysed with respect to its impact on "increasing employability of graduates, achieving more flexibility in higher education, establishing a quality enhancement culture, and outcomes-based curricula that lead to relevant qualifications" (BFUG Working Group on Stocktaking 2007: 44). Student involvement is related to the successful implementation of Bologna reforms in general. In the 2009 Stocktaking Report, student participation in the governance of higher education institutions is included in the social dimension section. It is included as a general policy measure to widen access to higher education (Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 130). The London (2007) and Leuven (2009) Communiqués do not refer to the issue and the Budapest-Vienna Declaration (2010) affirms the existence and importance of student involvement for the entire reform process.

The ESU advocates the recognition of students as active partners of the higher education community, rather than passive consumers (ESU 2001a, 2001b). In its Göteborg Declaration

(2001a), the ESU states that students are active partners in higher education rather than passive consumers of a tradable product. Students demand to be included in the Bologna Process and in all other decision making processes of higher education and to have legislative support to secure fair treatment (ESIB 2001a:2, 2001c, ESU 2003a, 2005a). In relation to the social dimension, designing and steering of student services are mentioned as specific examples (ESU 2003a). In all Bologna With Student Eyes reports (2003-2009) and the Bologna at the Finishing Line report (2010), the ESU analyses student involvement in higher education governance at the institutional, national and Bologna level as an essential element. In none of these reports, the ESU defines student involvement as part of the social dimension.

In the Trend Reports of the EUA, student involvement in higher education governance is interpreted as a factor facilitating the successful implementation of the Bologna Process reforms. The Trends III Report evaluates student involvement at the institutional, national and European levels. It is perceived as a general issue of the Bologna Process, i.e., better implementation and internalisation of reforms with reference to the Prague Communiqué. In this report, student involvement is discussed specifically in relation to their contribution to the social dimension and higher education as a public good, apart from the Bologna action lines (Tauch & Reichert 2003: 26). The Trends V Report analyses student participation together with student services without referring to the social dimension explicitly (Crosier *et al*. 2007: 52). The Trends 2010 Report also has a similar perspective and specifically emphasises the importance of student involvement as part of student services without referring to the social dimension. Accordingly, student involvement would improve the understanding of students about a specific higher education institution (Sursock & Smidt 2010: 87). In this sense, student involvement is considered as a measure to improve student experience.

The Council of Europe pays special attention to the governance of higher education as one of its focus areas in the Bologna Process. In this context, it carried out surveys and produced reports. In its 2003 report, the importance of student involvement in the governance of higher education is discussed with respect to its various aspects. The issue is interpreted as a general issue of higher education governance and not linked to the social dimension (Bergan 2003). Student involvement is considered as a necessity to ensure the democratic development of societies and the success of any reform process.

In conclusion, ensuring student involvement, together with other stakeholders of higher education, is mentioned as a necessity to achieve a genuine EHEA (cf. Conclusions of the "Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-Wide Competition" seminar, 2005 and Bologna Secretariat 2005: 9–10), as well as to implement reforms in higher education. In many documents the Prague and Berlin Communiqués are referred to indicating the relationship between the social dimension and student involvement in governance. The ministerial communiqués and declarations do not limit student involvement to the social dimension and mention it in a larger context, i.e., student participation in the governance of higher education in general. In a similar way, all stakeholders that paid attention to the issue mostly perceived student involvement with a general connotation. The social dimension and student involvement are related to each other only occasionally and can be assumed to be linked due to being items promoted by the ESU.

4.6. Conclusion

The chapter provides the research with a social dimension definition as well as showing its embeddedness in the Bologna Process. In doing this, the differences among the actors' definitions and perceptions are taken into account as well. Different actors interpreted the social dimension in a variety of ways, for example as an overarching element covering all social aspects of Bologna Process reforms, as a guiding principle and as a transversal action line.

The social dimension became connected to the Bologna Process with the attribution of status, role and follow-up procedures which also shaped its development in the process. When the social dimension was pushed into the Bologna Process, it was only an item to be explored. In time, the number of items in relation to the social dimension has increased, which is a sign of its increasing importance and of the increasing attention paid to the social dimension. Its balancing role demanded emphasising the social characteristics of higher education to counterbalance the emphasis on competitiveness. In time, this role came to be interpreted as a supporter of competitiveness. To wit, achieving the goals of the social dimension is considered to enhance the competitiveness of the EHEA. The social dimension is included in all follow-up terms, e.g., international seminars, working groups, etc. While these activities in the beginning targeted at exploring the social dimension, the demands for systematic data collection and reports made them more action oriented. However, the data collection on the social dimension issues is still insufficient to cover all social dimension issues and all Bologna Process countries. The social dimension was included only once in the stocktaking exercise which did not bring so much clarity to its problematic areas or increase its status in the Bologna Process agenda.

The goals of the social dimension are analysed at two levels as strategic and operational goals. Initially, the goals of reducing inequalities and enhancing social cohesion are mentioned in relation to the social dimension. After 2007, these goals are rephrased as reflecting the diversity of the population on the student body, which is sometimes mentioned as achieving participative equity. This goal clearly has an emphasis on underrepresented groups. In 2007, the ministers started to mention another goal as maximising the capacities of individuals. These goals are operationalised as ensuring equal access to, progress in and completion of higher education studies. The social dimension acts to increase and widen participation in higher education; therefore, its scope of action goes beyond ensuring the right to apply and beyond increasing the absolute numbers of enrolments. The analyses show that the focus of the social dimension has been on the access and progress in higher education studies. The completion of studies goal does not have the same weight in the discussion, especially at the ministerial level and the means are absent in this respect. It can be concluded that the completion of studies is considered as an eventual outcome of the achievement of the previous goals. By looking at the ministerial documents, it is possible to conclude that the ministers placed an emphasis on all underrepresented groups; this is the most distinct feature of the social dimension. Underrepresented groups are mostly defined as people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, ethnic and linguistic minorities, people with disabilities and non-traditional students. Another group is defined as students with children. This group is not claimed to be a traditionally underrepresented group; yet asked to be better supported through services during studies. In this sense, it creates a different category. When the means in relation to the social dimension are searched, it is not possible to come across with a set of means specifically defined for the social dimension of the Bologna Process. Most of the means are defined primarily in relation to

other action areas and expected to promote the social dimension as a positive side effect. This situation on the one hand can be considered common in the Bologna Process context since means do not have clear-cut borders; on the other hand, as a special problem of the social dimension since it has been more neglected compared to other action areas as a late-comer, soft-nature issue. Still, admission mechanisms, flexible learning paths and student services are concluded as means to achieve the social dimension goals. Among these, student services are the only means directly related to the social dimension. Admission mechanisms focus on the enshrinement of anti-discrimination and regulatory measures to promote the participation of people from underrepresented backgrounds, especially from non-traditional educational paths. Some of the Bologna Process means are promoted to increase flexibility which is expected to facilitate the participation of people from underrepresented groups. Two points shall be highlighted in this assumption. Firstly, the flexibility to be brought by the two cycle degree structure, curriculum reform, the ECTS, qualifications frameworks etc. is to be seen. Currently, it is not possible to prove this policy claim empirically. Secondly, if such flexibility obtains its impact on underrepresented groups is to be seen. Will it promote the participation of underrepresented groups at all; if it does, of which underrepresented groups?

The social dimension, unlike other action areas of the Bologna Process, is primarily promoted by a stakeholder, the ESU, rather than countries. The EC, the Council of Europe, the EI, the EURASHE and the EUA are other actors which somehow turned their attention to the social dimension. While, the EC, the ESU and the EUA have been proposing specific actions to be taken with specific goals, the support of the EURASHE and the EI has been more at the principle level. These actors did not come with proposals to be implemented. The international stakeholders define different elements in relation to the social dimension depending on their institutional priorities and interests. The analysis of each actor has proven this situation. To wit, the EC highlights increasing employability and economic growth primarily, the ESU ensuring student wellbeing and equal access and the EUA promoting universities' resources. Although, these differing priorities in relation to the social dimension have developed commonalities in time, it is still possible to see different interests. A good example for this can be the actors' differing approaches to the goals. For instance all actors support the completion of studies as a social dimension goal. The EC supports this goal with the underlining idea of avoiding the waste of resources in case of drop out. The ESU considers the issue in relation to student wellbeing. The focus is not improving retention, but ensuring students' wellbeing during studies. The EUA considers the issue as a success measure for universities. High dropout rates are considered as institutional problems, as well as waste of resources. The differences concerning means appear especially with respect to the target groups and the relations of these means with the strategic goals. To wit, the ESU mainly defines the social dimension means with an emphasis on all underrepresented groups, while the EUA and the EC define it with an emphasis on non-traditional students.

The social dimension mostly does not conflict with the other action areas. In cases of mobility, degree structures and lifelong learning, it is based on blurred borders in between and large overlaps. Only the relation with the quality assurance needs caution. Despite recognising the traditional tension between increasing and widening access and quality assurance, most of the actors did not find the relation conflicting. The ESU even claims that the social dimension supports excellence. According to it, the social dimension and quality

assurance come together under the goal of enhancing quality and they define a common indicator: decreasing dropout rates.

The goals of achieving participative equity, ensuring equal access or equality of opportunities in access to higher education surely have not become policy concerns starting with the social dimension of the Bologna Process; the following chapter provides further conceptual discussion of the relevant issues. Another issue is the perception of and action in relation to the social dimension at the national level. Chapter 6 interrogates the reflection of this social dimension understanding at three Bologna Process countries.

5. A Discussion on the Key Themes of the Social Dimension

The exploration of the social dimension of the Bologna Process concludes the goal of achieving participative equity through ensuring equal access to, progress in and completion of higher education studies for all as the core of the social dimension. As issues are discussed in the form of policy goals and means in the Bologna Process context, it is necessary to look at the scholarly debates on the central concepts of the social dimension. This chapter aims at advancing the understandings of the empirically based constructs of the research which emerged during the endeavour to define the social dimension, i.e., equality of opportunities, access and success factors. Ensuring equal opportunities for all to access higher education and widening access have been in the agendas of national governments long before the Bologna Process. These policy issues gained importance with the massification of higher education and continues with the obstacles in including underrepresented groups in higher education. However, it is not possible to observe the same attention for the completion of studies. This situation is also reflected in the scholarly work. This chapter looks at debates on the equality of opportunity, equality factors and the changing participation and completion policies since the 1950s in the context of higher education.

5.1. Concepts of Equality and Equality of Opportunity

The equality concept lies in the centre of the social dimension. Especially until 2007, ensuring equal access to quality higher education and the removal of obstacles due to socio-economic backgrounds of students were prominently mentioned goals of it. After 2007, these goals are reformulated as achieving equal access, progress in and completion of higher education. The document analysis also shows that the social dimension definition put more weight on access and progress issues than on the completion of studies. The following discussion focuses on the equality of opportunity in access and equality factors for access and progress in higher education.

Defining equality has long been subject to scholarly endeavours. One way of defining the concept of equality is through defining inequality, in which case "some individuals, organisations, communities, ethnic groups, and so on receive more of some valued resource (wealth, political power, education, and so on) than others" (Milner 1972: 34). It is differential distribution of rewards to different individuals (Coleman 1973: 130). While there is a common perception of inequality, defining equality is more complicated and differences rise in measuring different types and extent of inequality (Milner 1972: 34). Dealing with equality in access inherited merit, equality of rights and equity are discussed as underlining concepts (Clancy & Goastellec 2007: 137-138). Inherited merit is described as being fortunate to be born in certain social groups. According to it, individuals' circumstances or resources gained through being a member of a social group determine their access to resources. "Progressively, during the 20th century, and as a consequence of demographic, economic, political and ideological pressures impinging on access (Goastellec, 2006), inherited merit is being abandoned and replaced by the norm of equality of rights" (ibid.). Milner (1972: 12)

explains this replacement with a commitment to achievement[34], which demands the recognition of achievements rather than circumstances in access to resources. In this sense, equality is considered as "a derivative of achievement".

The equality of opportunity has been subject to extensive scholarly debates. Nash claims that it is commonly defined with the underlining idea of ensuring that people who would like to access certain resources shall not be denied on the basis of certain obstacles (2004: 364). Scholars dealing with the equality of opportunity often conceptualise it in terms of achievements or relevant factors (for which individuals are held responsible and are considered to be dependent on individuals' preferences, ability, effort, motivation, etc.) and ascriptions or irrelevant factors (which individuals cannot influence and are independent of individuals, such as inherited attributes, parental income, social environment etc.). The case of perfect equality of opportunity requires "no correlation between ascribed and achieved statuses" (Milner 1972: 37). In a similar way, perfect equality means the absence of inequality of opportunity "since there is no opportunity to do better or worse" (Coleman 1973: 130). Yet, perfect equality or perfect equality of opportunity does not exist in reality. Different definitions appear on degrees of inequality based on achievements and ascriptions, their interpretation as obstacles, the ways to overcome these obstacles and the purpose of this action (e.g., ensuring equal rights or social justice, etc.). Some further questions in this sense are listed by Teichler as "is equality of opportunity to be achieved by social groups in general or realised for each individual? Does one aim to realise just the dismantling of formal barriers of entry, or does striving for equality of opportunity include the active promotion or even preferential treatment of those previously discriminated against in admission? Is equality to be understood as the equal opportunity to achieve educational success, in principle offered through an open educational system, or as equality in 'results'?" and what is the correlation between educational and occupational achievement? (1992: 285).

Several scholars discuss different aspects of these and similar questions. Jewson and Mason (1986) compile these discussions under liberal and radical approaches to the equality of opportunity. The **liberal approach** has its roots in classical liberalism. According to this approach, the equality of opportunity enables all individuals to compete freely and equally for resources. The policies are used "to ensure that the rules of competition are not discriminatory and that they are fairly enforced on all". This understanding focuses on the application of fair procedures for everyone (Jewson & Mason 1986: 313). This approach can also be understood formal equality in which equality is ensured with legal provisions preventing discrimination "in terms of gender, place of residence, ethnicity or social origins" (Hernes 1974 cited in Aamodt 2006: 331). The **radical approach** to the equality of opportunity is described as being "concerned primarily with the outcome of the contest rather than with the rules of the game", with the fair distribution of resources rather than fair procedures (ibid.). In this view, waiving procedural requirements in order to achieve access of underrepresented groups is unproblematic. The conscious utilisation of different mechanisms to different groups in order to achieve equality of results is possible. These

[34] Historically, the bourgeoisie demanded equality in the form of the rejection of inherited privileges protected by law. This demand was "not so much because of an abstract commitment to equality but because of an increasingly concrete commitment to achievement." The inherited privileges were blocking the way to translate "economic achievements into other forms of social status." (Milner 1972: 12)

measures can be language courses or quotas for people from ethnic/linguistic minorities or for females (Hermes 1974 cited in Aamodt 2006: 331). In the radical approach, the equality of opportunity is achieved when underrepresented groups can participate according to their presence in the society as a whole (Jewson & Mason 1986: 315-316). This can be understood also as equity (cf. Clancy and Goastellec 2007: 139). The equality of results approach relates not only to equality of rules but also to achieving social justice. Accordingly, the education system shall produce equal outcomes independent of circumstances. This approach places high emphasis on the impact of circumstances on achievements and abilities and claims for taking measures on these aspects as well. For instance, admitting people from underrepresented backgrounds independent of their prior qualifications is suggested as a measure. Such a claim runs the risk of treating "desires, preferences, motivational resources, and aspirations [...] as the outcome of socialisation into the culture of a class that accepts its subordination to capital" (Nash 2004: 364).

The liberal approach is criticised on the following grounds. First, the negligence of the continuity in education and in life in general is criticised. It is not possible to cut real life into clear parts. An opportunity is a starting point which depends on the result of a previous process which cannot be passed over (Hale 2006: 94). Second, the assumption of a clear division between achievement and circumstances is criticised (Hale 2006, Jewson & Mason 1986, Milner 1972, Roemer 2002). In this perception, ability is assumed to be "randomly distributed throughout the population and are not the preserve of an hereditary estate" (Jewson & Mason 1986: 314). Achievement is considered totally dependent on individual effort, since everyone has equal opportunities (Milner 1972: 14). Therefore "*your problems are all your fault.* And similarly, *your privileges are all your own achievement"* (Brennan & Naidoo 2008: 290). However, individuals are not able to control all conditions influencing their achievements or failures. Such an argument neglects the inherited sources of inequality (e.g., socio-economic background, pre-schooling experience, nutrition, etc.), the imperfections of the system (e.g., lack of information) and the influence of economic demands on higher education at the expense of exclusion. Third, shifting the main concern to ensuring the fairness of the rules of competition is criticised (Brennan & Naidoo 2008: 290). This kind of equality of opportunity functions to legitimise the absence of social equity, rather than achieving it. Brennan and Naidoo (2008) criticise the legitimisation of the unequal treatment of outputs based on the argument of fair rules. Fourth, the lack of relativity perspective is criticised. Individuals' achievements are relative to their competitors' achievements. "The positional worth of a credential is to a large extent a function of its scarcity value" (Brennan & Naidoo 2008: 293). Especially with the expansion of higher education, this aspect gradually became determining.

The categorisation made by Jewson and Mason can be regarded as the two edges of a spectrum rather than an overall division of a large scope of discussion into two. With a similar idea, Cohen (2001) groups different approaches into three as **right-liberal** (in line with the liberal approach), **socialist** (in line with the radical approach) and left-liberal types (cited in Hild & Voorhoeven 2004). The **left-liberals** can agree on differences of outcomes based on different choices and preferences and disagree on differences due to circumstances and ascriptions, while taking note of the inevitable impact of them on achievement. Within this approach, Roemer explains equality of opportunities based on the level-the-playing-field metaphor: "equal opportunity policy must create a level playing field, after which each individual is on his own – what outcomes finally occur will reflect individual effort, and outcome differentials are ethically acceptable, if the playing field was initially level, and if

they are due to differential effort" (2002: 455). Roemer argues that the equality of opportunity "obtains when all people who expend the same degree of relative effort also receive the same outcome" (Roemer 1998 cited in Hild & Voorhoeve 2004: 122). Roemer specifies preferences which individuals are responsible for as effort and resources, which are arbitrary, as circumstances. He argues for the employment of policies to level the playing field to minimise the impact of circumstances. It means taking compensatory actions for the circumstances of disadvantaged people (Roemer 2002: 470). In this way, the differences in final conditions would be, as much as possible, results of effort and as such they are allowed. In a similar way, Hild and Voorhoeve (2004: 119) define the equality of opportunity "when individuals with the same relevant characteristics attain the same outcomes, irrespective of their irrelevant characteristics". The irrelevant characteristics are the ones assumed to be independent of an individual. They also note that they are agnostic to the impact of relevant characteristics.

Similarly, Nash (2004: 365) defines the equality of opportunity as the struggle to make average achievements of individuals from different backgrounds more equal rather than identical. In this case differences in outcomes are agreeable. He differentiates differences and inequalities and states that not all differences are unequal or vice versa. Accordingly, the crucial point is not the differences but the fairness or unfairness of inequalities. This leads to a discussion on the theories of justice which can be found in Nash (2004) in detail (see also Hild & Voorhoeve 2004). Nash defines the provision of equal opportunities based on relevant criteria, yet without mentioning compensatory measures for disadvantaged groups. He considers these measures as a matter of separate strategy (Nash 2004: 376).

The left-liberal approaches are criticised, firstly due to the compensatory measures argument. Milner likens education to a relay race where the position in the end of each lap heavily depends on "how far ahead or behind your team was when you were handed the baton" (Milner 1972: 13). In this situation the recognition of inequalities and taking actions to compensate them are like giving a consolidation prize. The compensation actions are mostly in the form of extra coaching. This temporary coaching in the beginning of each lap, however, cannot be sufficient for people to catch up with the team ahead, whose members have *always* got attention from the best available coaches (Milner 1972: 13). "A level playing field is a necessary but not sufficient condition of a fair match: it is no guarantee of equal chances if one of the teams has not had the chance to practise, and its members are undernourished and have no football boots" (Hale 2006: 98). At this point Jewson and Mason's (1986: 322) distinction between positive action and positive discrimination shall also be pointed. They define positive action as efforts to remove obstacles and to facilitate "free and equal competition among individuals". Positive discrimination is defined as deliberate manipulations "to obtain a fair distribution of the deprived or disadvantaged population". This criticism targets at measures in the form of positive action rather than positive discrimination. Furthermore, the approach defining the problems with regards to individual's effort can legitimise the focus of solutions "on the (poverty of?) aspirations among the educationally disadvantaged rather than the structural obstacles they face" (Scott 2009: 134), such as the cost of education (Hale 2006: 97). Moreover, Hale argues that higher education is "far too late to the potential student's educational and social experience to overturn or compensate for accrued disadvantage" (2002: 99). It shall be noted that this argument has the risk of leading to a stalemate by suggesting the inequalities exist way before higher education and nothing can be done at this level. Hild & Voorhoeve (2004: 124) find these criticisms on the equality of opportunity misplaced and claim that the equality of

opportunity can work against inequalities of outcomes with the addition of a distributive principle. Roemer, while admitting the difficulty to differentiate effort and circumstances (i.e., individuals' resources influence their preferences), states that "social science has much to say about resource distributions that equalize opportunities even before philosophers and students of the mind further refine our conception of personal responsibility" (2004: 471).

A fourth view considers the equality of opportunity as "a false ideal" (Coleman 1973: 135), a myth (McPherson, 2002 cited in Nash 2004). According to this argument, the unequal private genetic and environmental resources (mostly gained from families) cannot be made up by the infusion of public resources. In case of an equal infusion of public resources, the existing private inequalities would remain unchanged. Therefore, an unequal infusion of public resources in a way to "counter the inequality of private resources" is required (Coleman 1973: 134). Coleman sees two problems in this distribution (1973: 135):

> 1) To fully counter the inequality of private resources, the publicly-provided resources for the privately disadvantaged must be sufficient to provide to all children the same opportunity as held by the child with the greatest private resources, genetic and environmental. This is obviously impossible. Consequently, some decision must be made about what extra level of publicly-provided resources, below this, should be provided to the disadvantaged. But this decision is then tantamount to accepting a particular level of inequality of opportunity.
> 2) If the State could be successful in fully counter-balancing differential private resources by reversely differential public resources, this would create an extreme disincentive to parents in supplying the private resources that they currently supply unequally. This would undoubtedly reduce the overall level of resources and thus the overall level of opportunity available to the young. For the most important environmental resources for the development of the young are those expended through enormous investments of time and effort and attention by parents. It seems highly unlikely that another, more equal, social arrangement than the family could stimulate this level of personal investment in children.

Coleman declares the ideal of equal opportunities false by claiming the impossibility of achieving it and its negative impact on families' intrinsic motivation. This argument measures the inequalities based on outcomes and claims that they are persistently unequal. This way of measurement is criticised for obscuring "the distinction between 'opportunity' and 'take-up', thus making it impossible to determine whether equality of educational opportunity has been provided" (Nash 2004: 374).

As this brief overview shows, the equality of opportunity is not an agreed upon concept. Scholarly views range from perceiving it as ensuring the application of equal rules for everyone to levelling the playing field with compensatory actions and to ensuring equality of results through positive discrimination. These can also be read as defining it with respect to formal equalities, a combination of formal equalities and compensatory measures and equality of results. According to the former views, the inequality of outcomes (different levels of achievement) is accepted, either in general or when they are due to differences in individual effort. According to the latter view, the ultimate aim is ensuring the equality of results with taking the impact of circumstances on effort and achievements into account. Another view rejects the equality of opportunity due to being a false ideal. While the existence of inequalities shall be acknowledged, this approach has not gained any further support.

In the social dimension context, the goal of ensuring equality in access, progress and completion of studies is clearly related to achieving social cohesion and participative equity, but not to promoting social justice. In this sense, in the social dimension it is not possible to

see the equality of results argument. Indeed, the analysis of the social dimension shows that the emphasis is more on access and progress, than on the completion of studies. Ensuring equality in the transition to the labour market is mentioned only in some of the international seminars (cf. Tausz & Gyöngyösi 2008), but did not gain support. The emphasis on taking action in order to reduce the impact of obstacles due to socio-economic backgrounds of students in achieving these goals suggests an argument for taking compensatory actions which would be expectable in the form of positive actions rather than positive discrimination.

5.1.1. Other Important Concepts

In addition to differing approaches to the equality of opportunity, a variety of concepts are utilised in these discussions, e.g., increasing access, increasing participation, widening access and broadening participation. These concepts are used interchangeably which creates an ambiguity of their understandings. Within the context of this research, **increasing access** refers to the overall increase in the number of students entering in higher education; **widening access** refers to the increase in the number of students coming from underrepresented groups. While access covers issues only in relation to the admission stage, the term participation includes actual entry and progress in higher education studies, as well. In this sense, **increasing participation** refers to the general increase in student numbers and **widening participation** means increase in the student numbers from underrepresented groups.

Another term to be clarified is **underrepresented groups** in higher education. These groups traditionally have lower representation in the student body compared to their presence in the society. The underrepresented groups in higher education change depending on various reasons among which the socio-economic composition, history and internal dynamics of countries can be listed. Still, they are commonly defined by gender (females - mostly in the past and currently in natural and technical sciences and advanced level of studies), age, race/ethnicity/mother tongue/nationality, socio-economic background, location (coming from deprived or remote areas), disabilities, previous qualifications (i.e., people without formal school leaving certificates) and life status (often named as mature students who tend to have family and employment requirements). This term is used interchangeably with disadvantaged groups. A change in the understanding of underrepresented groups shall be highlighted at this point. In the 1950s, underrepresented groups were understood as groups who are clearly, and in some cases formally, discriminated from access to higher education studies. With the legislative changes and actions to ensure formal equality this problem is solved long ago. For instance it is not possible to come across legislation openly discriminating against a certain gender or ethnicity. Nowadays, underrepresentation can mainly be understood in relation to people's educational capacity building processes. For instance many countries report lower participation rates of males compared to females in higher education. This is not about the legal conditions, but about different social, economic or psychological conditions of male students.

Another concept is **non-traditional students**, which is also open to interpretation and sometimes used interchangeably with underrepresented groups. It is used in reference to (Schuetze and Slowey 2002: 312-314):

- adult students "who with, or mostly without, the conventional higher education entrance qualifications had proceeded directly from school to work and came to higher education at later stages in their lives"
- "socially or educationally disadvantaged sections of the population"
- "older or adult students with a vocational training and work experience background, or other students with unconventional educational biographies"
- Students who "were not studying in a full-time, classroom based mode"

In the context of the Bologna Process, non-traditional students mostly refer to students who are older than the typical age cohort, who do not have formal qualifications but informal or nonformal prior learning or who have employment and/or family obligations (spouse, children, etc.). Hence, they are a subgroup in underrepresented groups.

The term **non-traditional education path** is used in this research as educational paths out of formal education, namely non-formal and informal education.

Participative equity in higher education cannot simply be achieved by increasing the enrolment rates, nor can it be achieved only by focusing on higher educational inequalities. It would be simplistic to claim that ensuring the equality of opportunities in access leads to social equity, since achieving participative equity in access, progress and completion of higher education relates to more complex dynamics. The following section discusses factors which influence participation in higher education.

5.2. Equality Factors

Commonly mentioned issues influencing the equality of opportunities can be grouped under financial, cognitive and motivational issues. Financial issues mainly relate to the cost of higher education and financial resources. Cognitive issues relate to people's ability to learn and their skills. Motivational issues are other background factors influencing the personal decision to study, e.g., the judgement of costs and benefits to enter higher education. Ensuring equality of opportunities in the context of higher education closely relates to the determinants of equal access to higher education (cf., Brennan & Naidoo 2008, Brennan *et al.* 2009, Huisman *et al.* 2003, McDonough & Fann 2007, Goastellec 2010). McDonough and Fann (2007: 54) note that by 1973 most of the studies focused on individual level factors such as parents and their occupational and educational status in access to higher education. Clark (1960) differently drew attention to the impact of institutional constraints on access. Also, Mc Donough, Ventresca and Outcalt (2000) point to enabling or constraining the impact of organisational arrangements and "the interplay between the individual agency and organisational structures in shaping educational opportunity" (McDonough and Fann 2007: 54). In the context of this research, factors influencing equal participation in higher education are discussed with a perspective to cover access to, progress in and hence completion of higher education studies. For the analytic purposes, these factors are grouped as socio-biological and structural factors. There is interplay between the above mentioned three groups of issues and socio-biological and structural factors. For instance, socio-biological factors play a role in financial, cognitive or motivational issues.

5.2.1. Socio-biological Factors

Socio-biological factors are mostly the conditions that individuals are born into and cannot be changed easily. These attributes include socio-economic status, demographic factors (i.e., age, gender, race, ethnicity and disability) and geographical proximity.

Socio-economic background is often stated as one of the key determinants in access to and successful continuation of higher education studies. It is generally discussed in relation to family and peer culture. The impact of family on the future education career occurs mainly through the financial support they provide for studies and the knowledge and awareness they pass on to their child about the importance and benefits of higher education. Such a social impact also comes from the peer culture. In addition to shaping individuals' norms and values which influence their ability to adopt academic norms and values, family and peer-culture is important for the needed support during studies (Pascarella, Pierson et al. 2004; Pike and Kuh 2005, Terenzini et al. 1996). The socio-economic background is generally measured with the level of income, educational attainment and occupational status of parents. The influence of social or economic status is can change depending on the countries and the funding model of education. According to the research results, the social status is especially influential on participation in countries where the economic factors are less influential, e.g., in Scandinavian countries which provide free education at all levels and generous financial aid (Aamodt 2006: 320). In these countries, the main obstacle is not necessarily the low level of purchasing power, but the low level of awareness. Yet, in many other countries economic status is as influential.

Demographic factors such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, mother tongue and disability are other features that impact on participation. These features influence participation through the level of knowledge and awareness on the education system, access to resources and capabilities to use own capacities. For instance, people with disabilities often have difficulties in participating due to physical environment. Despite there is not any legal entrance barrier for people with disabilities, the lack of physical environment to enable these people to actually access or continue higher education plays a discouraging role. Another example is historically underrepresented students who often "encounter challenges [...] to take advantage of their school's resources for learning and personal development" (Kuh et al. 2006: 14). Family status can also be added as a factor influencing people's ability to utilise their capacities. People with children might have obstacles to access to higher education and complete their studies, especially when support services are insufficient, e.g., financial aid or childcare services. Yet, it shall be noted that obstacles in participation due to having children is different from the rest of the demographic factors. This period is relatively limited and not an attribute.

Geographical proximity to higher education influences individuals' decision to participate in higher education (Aamodt 2006: 319). People living in remote, rural or deprived areas of big cities have more difficulties in accessing to and progressing in higher education since moving into or commuting to a faraway place for studies would bring bigger social, psychological and economic challenges.

5.2.2. Structural Factors

System level conditions are another group of determinants of access to, progress in and completion of higher education studies. These factors relate to the provision and conditions of the education system and country. These factors are most of the time shaped by public

policies. The structural factors are defined as the system size, the level of diversification of the higher education system, admission mechanisms, the cost of education, variety of learning modes and student services.

5.2.2.1. The Size of the Higher Education System

The number of higher education institutions and their student quotas determine the size of a higher education system. The system capacity has a direct impact on the access chances to higher education. The size of the system is most of the time determined by central level policy makers. The geographical distribution of higher education institutions also influences the accessibility of higher education.

The availability of private higher education also impacts the size of the system. Private higher education institutions are established to increase the capacity, mostly in cases of excess demand for higher education (Guri-Rosenblit *et al.* 2007: 384). Yet, it shall be reminded that despite the quotas for poor and successful students, private higher education serve to increasing access for people who can pay the full costs rather than ensuring participative equity.

While larger higher education system can increase access, Pascarella and Terenzini concluded that institutional size has inverse impact on "student persistence and degree completion", though small and indirect (Kuh et al. 2006: 53).

5.2.2.2. The Diversification of Higher Education Institutions

In the 1960s and the 1970s, the non-university sector was created with the idea of opening the doors of higher education to disadvantaged groups. This measure was taken in order to absorb the excess demand for higher education, to be able to provide diverse study options to diverse needs, motives and talents of the new student body. Furthermore, it was considered to be too costly to offer the traditional university education to masses (Teichler 2008: 3). The establishment of the non-university sector successfully increased the access rates.

In addition to the horizontal diversity, it is possible to observe vertical diversity in the higher education systems. The vertical diversity can be understood as the differentiation of higher education institutions based on reputation and prestige. The trend for vertical diversification creates a risk of reducing the participation opportunities of especially disadvantaged groups and enhances social exclusion (Teichler 2008a: 370). Teichler argues that "a relatively low extent of vertical diversity and a broad range of horizontal diversity"(2008a: 351) as a feasible alternative for being more motivating for students by providing a learning environment with diverse pool of peers, offering larger possibilities to access to high quality programmes, for serving regional opportunities (i.e., offering study possibilities for people in all regions and good graduates for all regions) and emphasising the qualifications rather than the institute issuing the degree in access to employment (Teichler 2008a: 370-371).

Empirical observations point to the fact that people from disadvantageous backgrounds are overrepresented in the non-university sector or more prestigious university sector continues to be highly open for people from privileged backgrounds (Teichler 2008a: 353, Clancy & Goestellec 2007: 142). In this sense, the availability of a non-university sector can be seen as a determinant that increased access; yet, with unequal life chances of graduates. Concerning the completion of studies, the type of higher education institution has small and indirect impact (Kuh et al. 2006).

5.2.2.3.Admission Mechanisms

Admission mechanisms serve to match the supply and demand in higher education. The level of selectiveness of the admission mechanisms directly influences access, as well as progress. Admission mechanisms create "the crucial point at which higher education touches most closely to the social structure" (Trow 1974:78). In the systems with strict meritocratic requirements for certain formal qualifications (e.g., certain graduation grades or certificates of secondary education), admission mechanisms can function as means of exclusion, especially for people coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In cases of excess demand for higher education, admission mechanisms can also function exclusively. For instance in countries where there is a fierce competition to access to higher education, educational credentials have tendency to be overrated. In such a situation, minor differences would have major impact on the selection process which could replace educational goals - such as personal development or occupational training - with the logic of the selection mechanism. Hence, the admission mechanism would eventually be more demotivating for the masses than it is motivating for the chosen few (Teichler 2007:7). In addition to the major way of admission through meeting formal qualifications, there are cases in which admission happens through the recognition of informal and non-formal qualifications. These systems are argued to be more open to the disadvantaged groups.

Nevertheless, admission requirements have an essential role in ensuring the formal equality. The availability of transparent, non-discriminatory and fair access requirements creates the basis for enabling equal access opportunities for everyone. The admission mechanisms are also important in being able to admit qualified candidates. Higher qualification requirements can increase the retention. In this sense, higher selectivity is expected to increase completion.

Currently, the Bologna Process reforms are expected to increase the flexibility of admission requirements through degree structures reforms and with its emphasis on the recognition of prior learning. The former one relates to the requirement that the first cycle graduates can access to the second cycle study programmes, irrespective of the type of their previous higher education institution. The latter one relates to the admission of people without formal qualifications into higher education.

Pre-higher Education System

In discussing admission mechanisms, the impact of pre-higher education system shall also be considered. The structure and sufficiency of secondary education and the study choices during secondary education can be determinant for decisions concerning higher education (Johnstone *et al.* 2006: 13). The degree of stratification at earlier levels of education influences participation through classifying prospective applicants at earlier stages of their educational career. These structures differ depending on the traditions of the countries. Teichler (2007: 28) defines three types of structures as "horizontal" in which "all post-compulsory secondary education can lead to higher education" (e.g., USA), "unified" in which selection relates to the completion of the secondary education, as well as admission, (e.g., Eastern European countries) and the "Western European" model in which secondary education is divided into "tracks" and "the most prestigious and demanding lead to higher education". In the stratified systems, the possibility to switch between different strata of schools would influence access and progress opportunities. The stratification of secondary education has inverse impacts on access and completion. For access, it reduces the risk of excess demand through limiting the eligibility of prospective applicants. However, the criteria of stratification and the low level of system flexibility can have negative impacts on access. For

completion, it can have positive impact by increasing the level of selectiveness of the system (Kuh et al. 2006).

In addition to this, the sufficiency of secondary education to prepare for higher education is an important determinant. This sufficiency depends on the quality and availability of secondary education. When secondary education is not free, is scarce or does not provide sufficient quality, access possibilities to higher education decreases. This decrease highly relates to the existence of additional mechanisms to make up the gap, e.g., private tutorship to get in secondary or higher education, which cannot be affordable for poorer families. The sufficiency of secondary education is also important for the establishment of a solid base for higher education studies. Students coming to higher education with better secondary education qualifications, skills and knowledge are expected to be more persistent (Kuh et al. 2006:1).

5.2.2.4. The Cost of Education

The cost of higher education is often cited as one of the key structural factors influencing participation in higher education. Higher education costs consist of application costs, tuition fees, other educational costs (e.g., books, study materials, trips) and living costs. The decision to study instead of working brings further costs due to foregone income. While most of the discussion on costs of education focuses on the tuition or other educational fees, living costs, e.g., accommodation, food, transportation, sum up to more than fees in almost all countries, except the United States (Johnstone *et al.* 2006: 11). Considering that most of the living costs are already born by families/students, the introduction or increase of tuition fees would mean increasing the financial burden even more. The cost of higher education also influences progression. Especially in cases of insufficient financial aid, students prefer to work. When this employment is non-study related or full-time, the retention tends to be lower (Kuh et al 2006: 25).

The increasing tendency of cost-sharing applications can be detrimental to the participation from lower socio-economic or minority groups, at least more than from middle and upper classes. Some obstacles for underrepresented groups accompanying increasing costs are due to (Teixeira et al. 2006: 350, Johnstone et al. 2006: 13–14, Chapman 2006: 80):

i. Ill-information*:* higher possibility of getting imperfect information on costs and benefits of higher education and the career prospects to make a rational choice,
ii. Discouragement*:* daunting price of higher education, discouraging impact of indebtedness for higher education (regardless of so-called rational calculations),
iii. Uncertainties*:* There are several uncertainties possibly reducing access and progress opportunities for underrepresented groups. Firstly, academic capacities cannot be known in the beginning of studies. In extreme, some students might end up with no degrees in the end of their studies. Secondly, getting a good job after graduation is not certain. The labour market is highly competitive and employment depends not only on the graduate but also on his/her competitors. Thirdly, the future value of the educational investment is not certain, i.e., a promising programme in the beginning of studies might be less demanded in the end of studies, due to the changes in the labour market.

5.2.2.5. Variety of Learning Modes

The availability of various modes of learning that can appeal to various types of students can encourage access and support progress. The availability of such variety is sometimes also referred as flexibility which is claimed to increase inclusiveness.

An aspect of variety concerns the modes of study. The availability of part-time studies, evening courses, blended/dual learning, e-learning and open/distance education provides opportunities for people who cannot follow formal full-time education. Jones and Lau (2010) explain the positive impact of blended learning methods which has more student-centred learning approach and technological support in learning. The authors show empirical results of a blended learning project which attracted students from rural areas and older ages. The other non-traditional modes of provision are also stated to widen participation, especially to non-traditional learners (cf. Bennion, et al. 2011, Guri-Rosenblit 1999). However, the use of such modes can threaten persistence and graduation (Kuh et al. 2006: 27).

In addition to this, the teaching and learning approaches and educational practices can support progression of studies. These involve rearrangement of curricula, faculty and balance between teaching and learning with a perspective that prioritise students. Firstly, the pedagogical practices, the shift of teaching paradigm from teaching-centred to student-centred learning or promoting active involvement of students in learning process are argued to increase retention (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005: 646). Secondly, the diversification of curricula that would correspond to diversity of students culturally, racially, genderwise) (ibid.: 637) and the promotion of interdisciplinary curricular are mentioned. Thirdly, the promotion of student-centred faculty is important. This includes necessary adjustments in terms of balancing teaching and research in resource allocation, rearrangement of hiring, promotion and tenure decisions (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005: 646), as well as instructor skills, classroom activities and pedagogies and assessment measures. Socialisation with the faculty out of classroom also contributes to the student integration, which is argued to increase retention (Yorke&Longden 2004: 121-126).

In the Bologna Process context, the flexibility of the learning provisions is often mentioned as a central point. This flexibility is expected to be achieved through the adoption of two cycle degree structure, modularisation of study programmes, the use of the ECTS and national qualifications frameworks. However, increasing flexibility impact of these measures are more in the form of policy claims rather than empirical facts. As discussed by Elias Andreu and Brennan (2012), these measures can also lead to further exclusion of underrepresented groups. Apart from that the changes in degree structures expected to shorten the study duration, but the impact on completion rates or retention is to be researched. In the adoption of these reforms a perspective for learning outcomes and student-centred learning are also claimed to facilitate flexibility. This emphasis is rather recent in the Bologna Process. Since 2009, the student-centred learning is mentioned more and more; however, in an ambiguous way. Different actors interpret it differently. It can develop to empower students or sub-ordinate them to consumerism (using higher education rather than participating in it).

5.2.2.6. Student Services

The provision of widespread, high quality student services and support systems can encourage access, support completion of studies and ensure a healthy study environment. In traditional European universities, students were composed of a small and elite group and were considered as adults who should take care of their lives outside the classroom. The rest of the world, except the USA, followed the European model. In the USA, universities were expected to act as a parent to its students, "*loco parentis*" and have taken extra-curricular activities seriously (Altbach 2009: xiii). Until the early 19th century, student services were handled by academics and included only a few non-instructional issues. With the expansion of higher education, the way to handle student services needed a more professional

approach, as a result of which higher education student affairs and services appeared to cover food, accommodation, health services as well as social, cultural and leisure time activities, financial and career assistance, and disability services (Osfield and Ludeman 2009: 65-66). Student services can be grouped into guidance and counselling, financial support and general services.

Guidance and Counselling

Guidance and counselling services are essential for increasing knowledge and awareness on higher education and have a wide scope of influence. They are commonly provided on academic/educational, psychological, disability and employment issues. These services can target at prospective and current students and their families. The services for prospective students, especially from underrepresented groups who lack awareness or relevant knowledge, can promote participation.

A variety of information is needed by prospective and current students to be able to access to, progress in and complete their higher education studies. These include information on the costs of higher education, admission requirements, range of study options, programme requirements, financial aid opportunities, accommodation, food and health services (cf. Yorke & Longden 2004), as well as the future benefits of higher education, e.g., personal development and labour market prospects (Teixeira 2009: 54, Jongbloed 2006: 21–22). These services increase the familiarity with, knowledge on and awareness of higher education which in turn is expected to encourage prospective and current students to study. Braxton and McClendon (2001–02) found that "effective communication of rules and regulations positively impact student integration and persistence" (Kuh et al. 2006: 55). Connor and Dewson (2001) discuss the discouraging impact of uncertainties (i.e., lack of knowledge on benefits of higher education, income situation during studies and the student support systems) on access to higher education.

The information can be provided to prospective students descriptively on the admission requirements, types of study programmes, study conditions and career prospects of graduates. Prospective students and their families can receive further information from on-site visits to higher education institutions, face-to-face counselling or tutoring, fairs and open-sources such as web pages, portals, databases, etc. Furthermore, guidance services in secondary schools and special cooperation programmes between higher education institutions and secondary schools have an important role (Jongbloed 2006: 26). Information provision can be problematic due to the lack of information or excess of it, i.e., being hampered by the mountains of information which can be too complex. In this sense, it is important to ensure that available information can be reached by the potential receivers (Jongbloed 2006: 27). The transparency and availability of sufficient information influence participation decisions, as well as supporting the completion of studies.

Targeted guidance and counselling services are especially important to encourage and support people from underrepresented groups who have low levels of awareness. For these groups not only financial and academic possibility, but also financial worthiness is a matter of concern. (Johnstone *et al.* 2006: 13, Teixeira 2009: 54). While such applications are rather limited or new in Europe, some programmes are carried out in the USA for a long time and have proven to have positive results. For instance the TRIO programmes are for both prospective and current students and provide support activities to address to difficulties of coping with the requirements of student life, to educational requirements and choices, etc. TRIO programmes focus on the needs of (potential) students coming from disadvantaged

backgrounds. Despite having financial components, the main focus is the provision of non-academic counselling services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, cultural events, etc.) to help overcoming difficulties of integration into student life. Moreover, based on the argument that the social and academic engagement of students increases retention; academic and social support programs that complement the institution's mission and student characteristics are expected to help students to adjust to college. These can be the provision of orientation programmes, first year-seminars, tutoring, study groups, retention programmes (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005: 396) and intentional programmes to facilitate student-faculty interaction (Kuh et al. 2006: 40). The research shows that these services have a positive impact on retention (Chaney *et al.* 1998). International students are often listed as a group who need targeted support, despite not being part of an underrepresented group. These students come from different educational cultures and systems need special support for their academic and non-academic life matters.

Financial Support

The availability of financial aid for students is an important determinant of participation in higher education. There are various forms of financial aid offered to students and their families with various purposes. Financial aids are distributed based on (Johnstone 2006: 67–68)

- *needs:* level of income or other assets of the family or the student,
- *merit:* previous educational attainment or higher education attainment,
- *attributes:* ethnicity, disability, gender,
- *special attributes:* theatral, athletic, musical skills

The most common rationale in the distribution of financial aid is merit-based rather than need-based. This decision can be explained with the efficiency calculations. Compared to a (prospective) student from a middle-class socio-economic background, a (prospective) student from a lower class needs more financial aid to cover his/her daily and study expenditures. Therefore, funders prefer to help more middle class students instead of fewer lower class students with the same amount of money. Moreover, middle class students have a higher probability to complete their studies compared to lower class students, which is important for the sustainability of institutions and reputation (Milner 1972: 36). However, merit based aids have the potential to reproduce existing inequalities, since students from advantageous groups have higher merits.

The literature suggests four main forms of financial aid: grants, scholarships, loans and subsidies (direct and indirect). **Grants** are defined as non-repayable financial aid. **Scholarships** are defined as non-repayable financial aid provided by institutions with a specific target, e.g., to attract the most desired type of applicants (Johnstone 2006: 61). **Loans** are repayable financial aid for students. **Subsidies** can be direct (usually partial) aid for food, accommodation, transportation, etc. or indirect, e.g., subsidies for interest rates of loans, loan guarantees, child allowances and tax exemptions (Johnstone 2006: 59).

Various combinations of these financial aids are applied depending on the funding logic of a country. The current trend is for increasing the share of loans and reducing the grants in student finances. Similar arguments are applied to advocate loans as tuition fees, in line with the cost-sharing approach (See BOX 2). According to the advocates, widely available loans enable people with financial barriers to access to higher education. The public guarantee on student loans for repayment would give opportunity to get loans without collateral (Teixeira

2009: 53). Loans are also advocated for being more cost effective than the grants. If grants and loans are similarly effective in overcoming the financial obstacles, it is argued that, loans should be preferred to grants because it is possible to offer loans to higher number of students (Johnstone 2006: 69). Another opinion suggests different target groups for grants and loans. According to it, while loans should be made available for students with credit constraints, grants should be for students needing cost reduction. Therefore, the main use of grants should be persuading people who otherwise would not participate in higher education (Finnie 2004:8 in Jongbloed 2006: 37). According to opponents, the combinations opting for more loans have discouraging impacts especially for people from disadvantaged backgrounds who are more unwilling to take loans. The risk of "debt-averse", i.e., unwillingness of students to take loans, is pointed with the findings of a research which was conducted in the United Kingdom (cf. Callender 2003). The research results indicate that financial aid for students' education and living costs affects enrolment positively and in varying levels for different income groups. Grants are concluded to have more positive impact than loans or other forms of financial aid especially for students from lower income groups, while loans have more positive impact on middle-income groups, and little impact on high income groups. According to the empirical evidence from the United States, financial aid increases retention in a way to favour grants to loans (Callender 2003: 138). It is possible to conclude that financial support for students improve the participation possibilities in general, but the assumed cost-benefit calculations in particular have a negative influence on educational choices of people from poorer families (Jongbloed 2006: 37).

In addition to the form of the aid, the sufficiency of financial aid is also important for its impact. The sufficiency changes by location and living status. Financial aids are generally arranged based on living expenses; however, different localities and status of students (living with parents or alone, with children, at an older age) imply different costs (Johnstone 2006: 72).

General Student Services

In many countries, students are offered accommodation, food, health (mostly including psychological counselling), child care, transportation and leisure time services for their daily life. In addition to these, the provision of physical infrastructure, e.g. libraries and study rooms, to ensure a healthy study environment composes an important part of educational student services. The provision of these services depends on the system of the countries; it can be organised at the national, regional or institutional level. The availability and scope of such services encourages access and supports the progression of studies by increasing the social integration. For instance, living on campus increases engagement of students by providing "more opportunities to interact with peers and faculty members" (Kuh et al. 2006: 53).

5.2.3. Conclusion

By looking at the literature on access and retention[35], it is possible to conclude that while individual level factors would play the same role for access and progress in higher

[35] There is a rich research literature on retention and how to measure it. Following Tinto's Theory of Student Departure, Astin (Involvement Theory) and Pascarella and Terenzini defined adjustment to college life/student engagement as an important factor. According to this theory, the greater the social and academic integration and involvement is, the higher the persistence. However, Braxton and others

education, the structural level factors have different influences. The structural features and conditions of higher education system (size, control, location, ownership and admission mechanism) are more influential for access than for progress. Matters of variety of higher education provision and student services are more relevant for progress than access. Moreover, while the factors increasing selectivity of the system (stratification, highly selective admission procedures) decreases access, they increase retention. In a similar way, the factors increasing variation of the system, e.g., variety of provisions, are argued to increase access and decrease retention.

The discussions on socio-biological and structural determinants of participation in higher education cover access, progress and hence completion of studies. The document analysis shows that the social dimension definition has more weight on access and progress issues than on the completion of studies. There was barely any discussion on the improvement of retention or student experience in the social dimension context. Or, any attempt to define improving retention as a goal. Even though the social dimension includes progression as a goal, it does not include improving retention or higher education experiences, increasing the impact of higher education in the development of verbal, quantitative, subject matter competences, cognitive skills, intellectual growth, psychological change and moral development.

5.3. The Expansion of Higher Education

In discussing the equality of opportunity in the higher education context, a special section shall be reserved for the massification of higher education, since it increased the capacity of the higher education systems immensely. The expansion brought along discussions about its drivers and impact on achieving equity in participation in higher education.

A massive expansion of higher education was experienced by all advanced industrialised countries after the Second World War. Trow (1974) describes this expansion by classifying higher education into three "ideal types": elite, mass and universal higher education. Higher education systems that enrol up to 15% of the corresponding age cohort are categorised as "elite"; 15 to 50% as "mass" and more than 50% as "universal" (1974: 63). These systems do not necessarily exist in different stages of history and explain the overall system, instead "*elite higher education* is supplemented in the process of expansion by *mass higher education* and later additionally by *universal higher education"* (Teichler 2008a: 354). Trow (1974: 57) defines three ways of expansion: the rate of growth, growth in absolute size and growth in the percentage of the relevant age cohort accessing to higher education. Each one of these aspects brings along certain consequences. The rate of growth brings changes in the governance, administration and socialisation processes of higher education. The increase in the absolute size of higher education brings changes in the norms and structures of higher education and the increase in the percentage of the relevant age cohort accessing to higher

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concluded that the operational definitions for academic and social integration are inadequate and methodologically flawed (Braxton and Lien 2000; Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson1997; Hurtado and Carter 1997). There are also other theories focusing on interpersonal relationships (social network theory), organisational (size, selectivity), psychological, cultural and economic perspectives in explaining retention.

education brings concerns about the participation inequalities depending on the regions, religions, ethnicity and socio-economic class (Trow 1974: 58). This last aspect of expansion is the particular point of concern in this research. Higher education systems went through substantial changes due to the expansion. One of the changes is on *attitudes to access* with the increasing percentages of the relevant age cohort accessing to higher education. The attendance came to be seen not only as a privilege of certain groups, but as a right, even an obligation for people with formal qualifications. The ones who do not continue to higher education after secondary education are seen as losses or defects to be fixed (Trow 1974: 63).

Another change is the diversification of the student body accessing to higher education. The delays in access to higher education after the completion of the secondary school meant increasing number of mature adults in the student body, who possibly already have occupational experience and family ties (a spouse and/or children). The increasing number of students from poorer sections of the society brings along higher number of students working in non-academic jobs to earn their living. Indeed, this practice seems to go beyond the "poor but able" students and can include up to 50% of the student body (Trow 2006: 255). In addition to these groups, the student body got more heterogeneous with increasing number of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, from different educational backgrounds and from different geographic destinations. This change in return changed the interpretations of the core skills and values of higher education (Gibbons 1998:12-14).

There has been a variety of dynamics driving the expansion of higher education discussed by several scholars. Teichler (1988: 24-25) lists four major drivers as scientific advancement, the acknowledgement of human capital for economic growth, social demand for expansion and as a means of cultural enrichment. Aamodt and Kyvik (2005) discuss the interplay of individual demand, labour market demand and access policies in explaining the expansion in Nordic countries. Scott (2004: 128) mentions increasing demand for higher education graduates as the pull driver and increasing social demand for higher education as the push driver. It is possible to group these as economic, political, social and individual drivers.

Starting from the late 1950s, the expansion of higher education is advocated due to being essential for economic growth. The expansion of the public sector demanding civil servants and industrial economy demanding highly qualified workers required larger higher education systems to produce the needed labour force (Gibbons 1998:11). "This was a period when the economics of education succeeded in delivering a concept rapidly absorbed in higher education politics: a substantial increase of entry quotas to higher education and of graduation quotas among the corresponding age groups was considered in most countries as a precondition to stimulating economic growth" (Teichler 2008: 3). In the 1990s, higher education's contribution to sustainability and competitiveness of the knowledge based economies has started to be emphasised (Guri-Rosenblit *et al.* 2007: 374). Universities' role in the production and diffusion of systematic knowledge, as the most valuable input of the knowledge economies, increased their importance. (Huisman *et al.* 2003: 5, Brennan *et al.* 2009: 144, Teichler 1988: 24)

Regarding the expansion a result of interaction between labour market demands, individual demands and public policies, Aamodt (2006: 317) mentions the simple assumption that expansion needs political will to invest in higher education. Governments intervene in the interaction between the labour market and individual demands with the concerns of enhancing equality of opportunities in access to higher education and of social and economic development prospects of the country. Possible political decisions to increase the number of

available study places can be irrespective of the needs of the labour market or individual demands (Aamodt 2006: 318–319). In addition to national level political willingness, international organisations and politics also influence participation policies. Many international organisations, e.g., OECD, World Bank, European Union and Council of Europe, emphasise achieving a balance between economic and social concerns through participation policies. Increasing participation is considered as a means to both to avoid "waste of talent", which would be harmful both for the economy and society, and to promote democracy, active citizenship and social cohesion (Brennan *et al.* 2009: 144).

Social demand for egalitarian and democratic societies that arose especially after World War II was another driver of the expansion (Gibbons 1998:11). The increasing proportions of the relevant age cohort accessing to higher education made the groups who cannot or do not participate in higher education more apparent and hence increased the demand for policies addressing them (Trow 2006: 246).

Individual demand has also played its role in the expansion. One explanation for growing individual demand comes from the human capital theory which approaches education as an investment made by individuals and society. Accordingly, rational individuals would make such an investment with the expectation of high rates of economic return (e.g., higher wages) (Aamodt 2006: 317). Another driver of the individual demand is higher life standards, higher occupational and social status etc.. Higher education is perceived as a means to improve social opportunities. Furthermore, public policies promoting access and labour market demand for highly qualified employees have increased individual demand for higher education. Last but not least, Vlasceanu and Grünberg explain a psychological driver with the "snowball effect". As the participation rates reach a critical point, individual demand is bound to increase (2008:23).

5.4. Participation Policies in Time

The expansion of higher education necessitated governments to produce different participation policies and to develop different measures in time. The inclusion of higher number of people and wider sections of society creates the core of the participation policies. The drivers and the importance of these policies in governmental agendas have changed in time. To start with, after World War II, in many Western countries, increasing the enrolment rates was the main focus of these policies. Increased enrolment rates, in return, brought more egalitarian concerns into the participation policies and in the 1960s, the focus shifted on the inclusion of underrepresented groups and particularly women and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds in higher education (Huisman *et al.* 2003: 3).

Scott (2009: 138) identifies three broad policy strategies in relation to the access of underrepresented groups. The first strategy was taking affirmative action. In 1960-1980, in the USA and to a lesser extent in Europe[36] affirmative action programmes were employed. These programmes aimed at giving preferential access rights to underrepresented groups. The second strategy was taking no action. In the 1980s and the 1990s, widening participation was expected to happen as a side effect of increasing access rather than being the primary purpose. Since there was not any systematic action taken to promote inclusion, the inequalities in access remained as a natural result (Scott 2009: 139). As the third strategy,

[36] Less enthusiasm for affirmative action in Europe is explained with the dominance of social class politics rather than ethnic identity politics, and strong involvement of legal activism supporting these programmes in the USA, unlike in European legal institutions (Scott 2009: 138).

targeted programmes addressing underrepresented groups were employed. This strategy has two components: i. the provision of student financial aid and ii. institutional incentives (i.e., the provision of mostly financial incentives for higher education institutions) to recruit more students from underrepresented groups. Student financial aid has typically been more targeted in the USA and more universal in Europe. During the last decade there has been a tendency in Europe for more targeted aid, too (Scott 2009: 140). The institutional incentives component of this strategy, as it is utilised in the USA and Europe, has certain weaknesses: firstly, it is politically timid not to be accused of positive discrimination (Scott 2009: 141). Secondly, these initiatives for promoting fairer access developed alongside other initiatives (e.g., the promotion of world-class universities) which may cancel out the former one. Thirdly, they are inevitably fragmented, since there are various types of underrepresented groups needing various kinds of policies (Scott 2009: 142). Despite the weaknesses, institutional incentives seem to be the preferred strategy for the time being, especially thinking that the student financial aid component has been implemented hand in hand with tuition fees and the increase of market practices in higher education (Scott 2009: 142).

While Scott provides a mostly financial and USA-based overview, Teichler (2008: 24-25) provides a European overview of policies. In the 1950s, the policy focus was restructuring secondary education and the reduction of financial obstacles to access, e.g., the abolition of fees and the provision of scholarships. Policy in Western European countries in the mid-1960s focused on the improvement of guidance and counselling for disadvantaged people and the availability of higher education institutions in peripheral regions. In the end of the 1960s and the 1970s, the horizontal diversification, i.e., the creation of a non-university sector was a common action as a means to absorb the mass demand for higher education (Teichler 2008a: 360). Moreover, "compensatory education", "affirmative action" and flexibility in the admission requirements for people without formal credentials were common policy means. Another policy means was the provision of "a certain minimum of training beyond compulsory schooling for the most educationally disadvantaged youth", which can be considered as the creation of an alternative for the ones who cannot make it to higher education (ibid.).

Towards the end of the 1970s, the focus on the increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education "*lost momentum*" (Teichler 2007: 27). Teichler (2007: 25) lists a several reasons for this. Firstly, the persistence of participative inequalities, despite the huge expansion, made them more apparent and created pessimism on ever overcoming them. Secondly, the expansion created concerns for quality and beliefs of "over-education". Lastly, the concern for disadvantaged people decreased with the change of the socio-political climate from a more just and equal society towards the acceptance of "winners" and "losers" of a hierarchical society (Teichler 2008a: 362). Furthermore, "a broad coalition of those hoping for reduction of inequality and those in favour of a meritocratically legitimised inequality collapsed, once education expanded beyond the presumed demand of the employment system, and a 'demand' for social inequalities began to dominate the scene" (Teichler, Hartung & Nuthmann 1980 cited in Teichler 2007: 25). Similarly, a shift from horizontal to vertical diversification which is based on the reputational hierarchies between institutions occurred. In the 1980s, the primary concern was not the "equality of opportunity" anymore; but, financial efficiency, quality of education and institutional reputation (Teichler 2007: 34). Currently, the same trend continues with an increasing emphasis on the excellence and competitiveness of higher education systems. A concern accompanying this trend is the ageing societies of Europe. Therefore, if it is possible to talk

about a target group, this group would consist of the most successful prospective students, international students, mature students and students with employment.

As funding is an influential determinant in higher education policies, its role in the participation policies deserves attention. Traditionally, national governments have opted for the economic rationale in ensuring the affordability[37] of higher education. Many countries have had either no or very low fees and have provided financial aid for students, and subsidies to minimize financial barriers. Considering that disadvantaged groups have more participation problems even with the support of means-tested financial aid, removing their obstacles has higher costs for governments, hence is considered ineffective. Johnstone also notes that despite the existence of policy idea, none of the OECD countries made enough financial investment to lessen or eliminate the financial barriers for disadvantaged groups (2006: 72). This policy rationale, anyhow, changed in time. Recently governments, e.g., Austria, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, have started to introduce or increase tuition fees, which show a substantial shift in the funding policies (Huisman *et al.* 2003: 6). This new approach is based on the "cost-sharing" understanding which clearly means increasing higher education costs for students/parents and directly affects the participation of people from disadvantaged backgrounds (Teixeira *et al.* 2006: 343). The expected increase in inequalities are claimed to be balanced with accompanying financial aid programmes, e.g., grants, loans and other subsidies. There are opposing views on the application of cost-sharing practices, especially with respect to their impact on participation. Please see Box 2 for a discussion on cost-sharing.

Concerning retention policies, the research literature is in a way limited. Relevant work on retention measures primarily comes from USA, UK and Australia. In this sense, the literature does not provide information on system level policies from European countries very much. The policies mostly focus on the institutional level. The current measures include the introduction of targeted guidance and counselling for prospective students, current students, "risk-group" students and their families. In addition to this, a policy measure can be to use financial incentives continuation and extra awards) for institutions to increase retention and completion (Bunting in Yorke&Longden 2004).

To sum up, access has been an essential policy driver for higher education all the time, yet with a changing balance of emphasis. While after World War II, the emphasis was more on democratic and social concerns, during the last two decades this emphasis has become a "secondary and essentially ameliorative project"(Scott 2009: 128) compared to the economic objectives of ensuring qualified work force and the concerns for the knowledge economies. Access came to be considered as a means to ensure "reasonable standards of social equity within higher education systems increasingly enthused by the market" (Scott 2009: 128).

[37] "Affordability indicates the relationship between the costs of higher education and the means available to pay for these costs (McPherson & Schapiro, 1991)." (Huisman *et al.* 2003: 11)

BOX.2 Cost-sharing applications in higher education

Since the 1980s, cost-sharing has become an influential idea shaping funding policies. The main arguments advocating cost-sharing are based on efficiency, equity, private benefits, necessity, institutional benefit, short term relevance, price inelasticity and non-financial causes of underrepresentation.

As for efficiency, free goods are claimed to be used inefficiently due to little costs involved (Johnstone 2006: 55). Accordingly, paying for higher education would make students more demanding in quality and services, more conscious of their choices and work harder (Johnstone *et al.* 2006: 10). As for equity, free education is claimed to be regressive. Accordingly, public subsidies for higher education are largely enjoyed by people from higher socio-economic backgrounds, since this group comprises the majority of the current student body. However, the public subsidies are financed through taxes of all citizens. Hence, free higher education means the redistribution of wealth from poorer people to richer ones (Teixeira 2009: 50, Johnstone 2006: 55). A supporting argument is based on the high private rate of return for higher education graduates, i.e., graduates have higher levels of income, longer and quicker employability, higher life standards and social prestige. Since most of the graduates are prospective privileged groups, it is unfair to fund future high income taxpayers' education with present low income taxpayers' resources (Jongbloed 2006: 31). Furthermore, since there is a high private rate of return for higher education, i.e., it is normal to ask for a contribution from the students (Teixeira 2009: 49). Cost-sharing is claimed to be necessary due to the scarcity of financial public resources. Accordingly, the massified size of higher education is not possible to finance from the public purse and this requires the diversification of funding sources for higher education (Teixeira 2009: 50, Johnstone *et al.* 2006: 10). In this regard, allowing institutions to freely set their tuition fees is advocated for improving institutional benefits. In principle, the revenues can be returned to students in the form of better services, e.g., higher variety of course offers or programmes, better learning environment, etc.. However, practices show that tuition fees are often used as an alternative to state funding rather than supplementary revenue (Johnstone *et al.* 2006: 10). A supporting view mentions relative price inelasticity of higher education. According to different empirical evidences, the presence, increase or absence of tuition fees do not change the demand or do not necessarily have a negative impact on access, anyhow (Teixeira *et al.* 2006: 349, Jongbloed 2006: 36, Johnstone *et al.* 2006: 9).

Opponent arguments can be listed respectively. Efficiency arguments have the assumption that (prospective) students are rational and well informed consumers, which does not reflect the reality and remains at the theoretical level not only for higher education, but also in general. The equity claim also remains at the theoretical assumptions level. Not every higher education graduate has a job with a high salary. Increasing the private costs of higher education would simply reinforce the advantageous position of upper classes and enhance inequalities faced by disadvantageous classes. Furthermore, this argument ignores "the more regressive patterns prevailing in the elite university systems of the past and also, with the decline of the welfare state and the triumph of neo-liberal discourse, the abandonment of progressive tax systems which had the effect of making many universal as opposed to targeted public services open to the same charge of favouring the rich at the expense of the poor" (Scott 2009: 133). Radicals, despite agreeing that middle classes have been the main beneficiaries of expansion, advocate "even more rapid expansion, an end to the hegemony (or, at any rate, favoured treatment) of elite institutions within mass systems and more aggressive forms of affirmative action rather than for the introduction of (or increase in) fees" (Scott 2009: 134). The private benefits argument is also problematic. The argument ignores the possible existence of public benefits. The argument is constructed based solely on the private return of higher education, i.e., beneficiary pays. Even though there is research on the private benefits of higher education, which is easier to measure quantitatively, wider societal benefits are not researched adequately and difficult to quantify (Brennan & Naidoo 2008: 295). Moreover, putting the emphasis very much on the benefits and discussing them only in terms of private rates of return carries the risk of replacement of educational goals with *credentialism* (Teichler & Brennan 2008: 263). The necessity claim reminds of the "there is no alternative" syndrome of the 1980s. Funding is an issue of policy making and hence is a matter of political priority for what to spend the public money. Concerning the impact of increasing tuition fees, the above mentioned research provides empirical evidence for students as a whole without looking at the specificities of different groups. Furthermore, data are collected from current students who are known to be from middle and upper classes.

5.5. The Equity Impact of the Policies So Far

Scholars have divergent views on the impact of the expansion on participative equity. It is agreed that despite the work of half a century the gap between upper-middle and lower socio-economic classes is still apparent (Trow 2006: 246). Scholars also agree that the participation of some underrepresented groups, e.g., women and minority communities, even if not all increased after the expansion. Scholars have different opinions on the amount of decrease in inequalities rather than the existence of it. This disagreement is due to the way of measuring inequalities.

Altbach (2000: 2) states some achievements of the expansion as i. increased opportunities for social mobility, ii. increased income levels associated with higher education and iii. opened academe for women and ''historically disenfranchised groups worldwide'' and concludes that ''inequalities remain, but progress has been impressive''. Other scholars also state the persistence of inequalities in varying degrees in different societies and agree with Altbach on the success of expansion (Brennan & Naidoo 2008: 290, Brennan *et al.* 2009: 143).

Several scholars do not evaluate the decrease in inequalities of underrepresented groups' participation as "impressive". They argue that compared to the size of the expansion, the increase in the participation of people from lower socio-economic groups has not been so high (Blondal et al. 2002; Galindo-Rueda & Vignoles 2003 cited in Brennan & Naidoo 2008: 292, Bratti, Checci & de Blasio 2008 cited in Scott 2009: 133). Despite statistical information shows an increase in the participation of people from lower socio-economic groups, Teichler (2007: 26) points that this increase is almost an automatic result of increase in absolute student numbers. Furthermore, the "concept of inequality deals with *relative* differences"; therefore, absolute changes do not necessarily influence the degree or type of inequality (Milner 1972: 34). In other words, the increasing size of the pie with the expansion does not necessarily change the distribution of the pie. Increasing absolute numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds does not necessarily signal an impressive decrease in inequalities. While agreeing with the "stability of *relative* inequalities", Arum et al. (2007: 29) argue that the "expanding pie is increasingly inclusive even when relative advantages are preserved, because it extends a valued good to a broader spectrum of the population". Another dimension of this relativity concerns achievement. According to Brennan and Naidoo, more people from underrepresented groups can earn a higher education degree, but "their advantages lie in comparison to people without any kind of higher education rather than in comparison to qualified people from higher socio-economic backgrounds"(Brennan & Naidoo 2008: 295). Accordingly, the increasing participation of people from underrepresented backgrounds does not necessarily mean increasing life chances of these groups. With this argument, the authors treat higher education as a positional good. Arum et al. (2007: 30) question the argument of education as a strictly positional good and argue that even if it is, the human capital instilled in students is worthy of expansion.

Clancy and Goastellec (2007) provide a short review of existing empirical work on access inequalities. Their and many other research results show that the increase, continuation or decrease of inequalities is a matter of interpretation. While studies looking at the absolute numbers of students coming from disadvantaged groups tend to conclude a huge decrease of inequalities, studies looking at the participation situation of the disadvantaged groups compared to advantaged groups tend to conclude a minor decrease. Even when proportional distributions are looked at, there are further challenges. Halsey et al. draws attention to the starting points of the groups. If a group's participation was very low in the beginning, a very

high rate of increase can be observed. In a similar way, for a group which already had high participation rates, the growth rate cannot be so big (cited in Bossfeld & Shavit 1993: 2). Last but not least, the lack of good comparative data on the participation of people from ethnic groups or people with disabilities, unlike participation by age and gender cause poor information (Clancy & Goastellec 2007: 147).

Calhoun touches upon the changing nature of inequality in addressing these different opinions. He states that the expansion of higher education which is accompanied with the diversification of higher education systems masked the inequalities. Before massification participating in a university was ensuring more or less similar life chances; afterwards, especially with the creation of the non-university sector, *which* higher education institution became a matter of concern as well. The masking effect is due to the insufficient information of parents and students about differences between different institutions (Calhoun 2006: 15). Concerning the impact of the non-university sector on participative equity, according to some, the fact that people from disadvantageous backgrounds are overrepresented in the non-university sector, which is less prestigious, shows that fair access is not achieved. According to others, there can be sectoral differentiations in order to meet different needs (i.e., mass teaching-less prestigious vs. exclusive research-prestigious) (Scott 2009: 134).

Teichler (2007:7) points to the risks of credentialism and the reproduction of existing inequalities. In meritocratic societies where mass higher education systems produce excess labour supply, "small differences in educational 'success'" become even more determining. In these cases, educational credentials are used to reinforce existing inequalities by distributing graduates to relatively persistent social classes. The diversification of higher education and the co-existence of elite and mass higher education support this reproduction (Teichler 2007: 7, Brennan *et al.* 2009: 148). In a similar way, Calhoun (2006:9) mentions the inflation of credentials with the expansion of higher education which put the emphasis on differing prestige of seemingly identical credentials. Albeit, the unequal access to these assets reinforces the continuation of the existing social order. While these credentials appear to be vital means for social mobility and other life chances for all, the inequality in actual access to higher education and the current structures of reproduction in societies are mostly neglected.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter provides a discussion on the equality and equality of opportunity concepts as the central themes of the social dimension of the Bologna Process. In addition to this, the main factors of access to and completion of higher education and changing access policies since the 1950s are discussed.

The equality of opportunities discussion focuses on the conditions of defining unequal participation of different social groups as problem and ways of solving this problem. Within the higher education context, the massification of higher education brings another dimension to this discussion. After World War II, all developed countries experienced a tremendous expansion of their higher education systems. Student numbers tripled in a couple of decades. However, increasing numbers did not necessarily lead to decreasing inequalities in participation in higher education. In order to deal with persistent inequalities, many countries applied similar policies to achieve some form of equality in the last half century. One commonality in policy interventions has been the development of compensatory measures for underrepresented groups and ensuring formal equality, which could not help

to avoid the reproduction of existing inequalities. Despite the changes in higher education systems, as well as the changes in technologic, social and political spheres of life privileged groups have kept their privileges. In order to better understand participative inequalities, it is necessary to look at the main influential factors of participation in higher education. These factors are discussed in two major groups: individual and structural matters. Individual level issues are mostly pre-given which cannot be changed by the individuals, structural matters mostly depend on the higher education policies in countries. These issues are discussed both as explanations of inequalities and as possible intervention areas for policy makers. While individual level factors would play the same role for access and progress in higher education, the structural level factors have different influences. For instance, the conditions of higher education system (size, control, location and type) are more relevant for access than progress. Reversely, matters of variety of higher education provision and student services are more relevant for progress than access.

In the social dimension context, the unequal participation of different social groups is defined as a problem. It is also acknowledged that formal equality is necessary, yet not sufficient to overcome the obstacles of underrepresented groups. In this sense, it is possible to observe a tendency for taking compensatory measures. This understanding of the social dimension does not go as far as taking measures in order to ensure the equality of results. The lower attention paid to the means to ensure completion of studies can be considered as an indicator of this approach. As for the structural factors of equality which can be matters of policy intervention, the social dimension focuses on admission mechanisms, the flexibility of learning provisions and student services. Considering admission mechanisms, the social dimension focuses on ensuring transparency and flexibility of admission requirements. The discussion also includes the pre-higher education structures in this context. It so far has not attended the other structural factors such as the size of the system and the cost of education. Considering the diversification of the system, the impact of the adoption of two cycle degree structure is to be seen, i.e., whether it will dilute the horizontal diversification and foster vertical diversification or not. Corresponding to the flexibility of learning paths, in this chapter the variety of provisions are discussed. These are mainly about the provision of various study modes, such as part-time, distance learning, etc.

6. The Social Dimension at the National Level

The Social Dimension of the Bologna Process chapter of the dissertation analyses the development, definition and relations of the social dimension. The dissertation explored definitions of the social dimension based on its i. strategic goals, ii. operational goals and iii. means. These are i. enhancing social cohesion, achieving participative equity and maximising capacities through ii. ensuring equality in access to, progress in and completion of higher education studies. The means to achieve these goals are grouped as iii. admission mechanisms, flexible learning paths and student services. This chapter interrogates the reflection of the social dimension of the Bologna Process at the national level with the help of country case studies. The aim is to see whether there has been any impact without assuming a top-down or a reverse approach on the development of policies.

The chapter answers the third research question:

3. Does the social dimension of the Bologna Process reflect on the national level Bologna Process policies in Finland, Germany and Turkey? How?
   3.1. Are the main Bologna Process actors of these countries aware of the social dimension? If so, what are their understandings?
   3.2. Are above mentioned policy goals and means of the social dimension of the Bologna Process observable in the relevant national policies?
   3.3. Have these policies changed since 2001? If yes, have these changes happened due to the social dimension of the Bologna Process?

The national case studies are developed based on the equality factors discussed in Chapter 5 and the definition of the social dimension. Chapter 5 provides the research with a list of equality factors, to remind:

1. Socio-biological factors: socio-economic status, demographic factors (i.e., age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, language, disability) and location
2. Structural factors: the size of system, admission mechanisms and the pre-higher education system, the cost of education, the level of diversification of the higher education system, variety of learning provisions and student services.

Out of these determinants, the discussion of some of the structural factors (i.e., the ones which are not included as the social dimension means) together with an overview of the higher education system, reasons of participation in the Bologna Process and access policies provide background information for each case study. These sections provide information on the background when the social dimension of the Bologna Process appeared. In addition to this, countries' involvement in the Bologna Process and the access policies since 1950s are provided as background information.

Since the main aim of the country case studies is to interrogate the reflection of the social dimension at the national level, the research looks for the understandings of the social dimension and relevant implementations. The case studies initially analyse the situation of the social dimension in each country by looking at the awareness of the social dimension among relevant policy actors, i.e. the Bologna Process policy actors at the national level. These actors are selected based on the national reports of the countries for the Bologna

Process and are representatives from national level organisations responsible for higher education:

Finland: the Finnish Ministry of Education[38], student unions (the National Union of Students in Finland and the National Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences), Finnish Rectors' Conference

Germany: the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, German Rectors' Conference, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany, the National Association of Student Bodies, the German National Association for Student Affairs

Turkey: the Council of Higher Education, the Student Council and the National Team of Bologna Experts.

As the Bologna level developments show, the involvement of students in higher education policy making has been vital for the entrance of the social dimension into the Bologna Process agenda. In this sense, special attention is paid to the role of student unions on the development of the social dimension in the selected countries.

Concerning the reflections with regards to the social dimension goals i.e., reflecting the societal diversity on the student body accessing to, progressing in and completing higher education studies with a special focus on underrepresented groups are considered. In this discussion, the socio-biological factors are illustrative.

Implementations of the social dimension are searched with regards to the social dimension means, i.e., admission mechanisms (i.e., regulations, the recognition of prior learning and qualifications framework), variety in learning provisions (i.e., two cycle degree structure, curriculum reform and modularisation and the use of ECTS) and student services. In this analysis, the key concern is to show the relevant applications and interrogate whether there has been any change directly due to the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The changes during the last decade are observed.

The countries are chosen due to the high diversity they exhibit. They provide a variety in the tradition, size and system of higher education, as well as diverse geographical, demographical and economic situations. In addition to this, as it was stated in the so-called Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process Report (CHEPS, ECOTEC & INCHER 2010a), the countries tend to spread in a spectrum of high-mid-low with respect to the social dimension goals and means. Furthermore, the researcher's experience in these countries provided convenience. The in-depth analysis of the country case studies interrogates the existence of common patterns of implementations in the selected countries.

Table 6.1 The Case Study Countries

	Finland	**Germany**	**Turkey**
Geography	North Europe	West Europe	East Europe/Asia
Population	5.2 million	80 million	75 million

[38] Since 2010 it is called the Ministry of Education and Culture

Economic situation (World Bank classification)	High income	High income	Upper middle income
Administrative structure	Unitary state	Federal state	Unitary state
Higher education tradition	Humboldtian	Humboldtian	Humboldtian & American
Year of establishment of the first university	1640	1386	1933

6.1. Finland

6.1.1. The Higher Education System

Finland has a binary higher education system[39] composed of universities and universities of applied sciences[40] (*Ammattikorkeakoulu-AMK*). Both universities and AMKs have full autonomy in determining their curricula, admitting students, staffing and internal administration.

The Finnish Ministry of Education (*Suomen Opetusministeriö*) is the highest level office responsible for higher education. The Department for Higher Education and Research specialises on higher education. The ministry is responsible for relevant legislation, drafting and budget proposals. The steering is based on mutually negotiated performance agreements between the higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education. These performance agreements are made for a three years period. While all universities[41] are state-owned public institutions, the AMKs[42] are maintained by municipalities or non-profit foundations. Universities are subject to the University Act[43] and AMKs to the AMK Act. The Ministry of Education finances both sectors. 64% of universities' budget is directly funded by the state. For the AMKs the state provides the core funding only.

In accordance with the strong welfare state tradition, the higher education institutions are considered as service providers and supervised by the state. With the recent amendments of the relevant legislation, the higher education system started to face more steering from a distance and market oriented practices.

6.1.2. Involvement in the Bologna Process

Finland is a Bologna Process country since 1999. Apart from the accredited necessity to be inside the Bologna club, the internationalisation concern has been an important driver for participating in the Bologna Process. Since the mid-1980s and especially the beginning of the 1990s, international integration has been a primary concern for Finland and includes promoting international cooperation in higher education. This started with the participation in EU mobility programmes (e.g., COMETT, ERASMUS). In the 2000s, international

[39] In 2009, the Universities Act has been amended which brought substantial changes to the governing and funding of universities. The act came into force in January 2010. Since the research focuses on the 1999-2010 period, the information provided in this section is based on the Universities Act 1997 with amendments from 2006.

[40] AMKs are referred as universities of applied sciences and polytechnics in different documents. In this research, they are referred in their Finnish abbreviation.

[41] Since 2010, there are also private universities.

[42] The two exceptions are Police College and Ålands Yrkeshögskola

[43] Since January 2010, two foundation universities are subject to Foundation Act.

competitiveness also became a part of this picture. The recent substantial changes in the Universities Act and AMK Act can be seen as illustrations of this concern. In addition to this, like in many other countries, the Bologna Process is perceived as an opportunity to solve existing problems of higher education in Finland. Shortening study periods, facilitating the transition into the labour market, decreasing dropout rates, lifelong learning and promoting mobility have been long-term concerns for policy makers. The degree structures, quality assurance and mobility action areas and especially the implementation of recognition tools can be considered as the primary Bologna reform areas in Finland.

The Finnish Ministry of Education has the key role in the introduction of the Bologna Process' reforms to the national level and guides the implementation of the reforms. In addition to this, the "Government EU sub-committee for Education monitors the Bologna process in general. The sub-committee consists of representatives from higher education institutions and social partners, other relevant ministries and the Ministry of Education" (Lehikoinen 2005: 3). The reforms are introduced by field-specific coordination groups which are composed of relevant fields' members from higher education institutions. The national follow-up group is composed of representatives from higher education institutions, student unions and relevant ministries in addition to the Ministry of Education. Finland also has a National Team of Bologna Promoters which introduced the reforms through various seminars. The ministry, traditionally, has a "round table" working tradition. In this sense, all relevant stakeholders are included in the preparatory work on equal footing and the final decision is made by the ministry. The same procedure is followed for the introduction of the Bologna Process' reforms.

6.1.3. Access Policies

In Finland, education is considered as the key to keep the country strong. Regarding Finland's history as a territory of Sweden and Russia for long years, it is identified in the interviews that being a small sized country places a special emphasis on the belief in education to improve the society. Historically, education is always seen as a tool for social mobility and the development of the country as a whole (Saarivirta 2010: 361). In order to make a small country competitive, ensuring that all citizens are well educated is considered as a must (LS, SA & SYL3 interviews 2009). Starting from the 1960s, the higher education policies focused on ensuring equality of opportunities socially and geographically through regionalisation, increasing access rates, the development of the non-university higher education sector, lifelong learning and increasing the participation of people from immigrant backgrounds.

The welfare state of Finland shaped the higher education policies with the help of development plans from the 1960s until the mid-1980s (Välimaa 2005: 245). In the 1960s-1990s, the governmental agenda was on the expansion and hence massification of the higher education system. The focus of the first Higher Education Development Plan 1967-1986 is ensuring "social and geographical equality by increasing access to" higher education to develop the country (Välimaa 2005: 248). The ministry set a 25% entry rate in higher education as a primary objective (Finnish Ministry of Education 1990: 12). Another measure was ensuring an even geographical expansion of higher education. In the end of the 1950s, all universities were in the south of the country which made access to higher education difficult for people from the north. As part of regional policy "major provinces were allowed to establish a university of their own in the 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s" (Välimaa 2005: 247). A geographically wide-spread higher education network enabled access to higher

education even where the population density is very low. The governments of the time also considered extension of the university network supportive for regional development by (Saarivirta 2010: 365). The second development plan added other priorities in higher education policies. The Higher Education Development Plan for 1987-92 put the weight on research, quality assessment, employability, institutional autonomy and ensuring accessibility of higher education for everyone (e.g., open university) (Finnish Ministry of Education 1990:52-55). The consecutive development plans, despite losing their strong influence in policy making, continued to emphasise ensuring access to higher education based on abilities, special needs and independent of financial background. Ensuring equal access independent of "age, place of residence, language and economic standing, to participate in high-standard education and training" is considered as a public responsibility in the 2003-2008 Development Plan (Finnish Ministry of Education 2004: 9).

In the 1990s, the establishment of the non-university higher education sector was the most significant reform in higher education in Finland. The first AMKs started to operate on a trial basis in 1991 and they became permanent in 1996. The AMKs were inspired from the *Fachhochschulen.* The former vocational post secondary schools were upgraded to the AMKs and the purpose was stated as "to raise the level of education in response to international developments and the demands of local industry and labour policy, to pool resources and to make vocational education more appealing for young people" (Finnish Ministry of Education 1990: 15). Various rationales of the reform were discussed by many scholars (cf. Ollikainen 1999, Saarivirta 2010, Välimaa 2005), one of which was surely to absorb the increasing demand for higher education.

In the 1990s, increasing participation continued to have an important place in policy development also due to another concern: the ageing society. The expected decrease in the labour force and its expected impacts on economic growth became important concerns in higher education policy making (Finnish Ministry of Education 2004: 10). This concern has placed an increasing emphasis on lifelong learning, including wider sections of the society - specifically immigrants- in higher education and increasing overall entry rates. Increasing entry rates to higher education has economic importance as well as social importance, like in many other countries. The policies aim at ensuring the availability of a highly qualified workforce as well as everyone's right to education and the social and cultural development of the society. For instance, the Ministry of Education set an aim to increase the entry rate of newly matriculated students to higher education to 75%, together with the goal of increasing the employment rate (SA interview 2009).

A better inclusion of immigrants in higher education is a specific concern of the government. Both the 2003-2008 and the 2007-2012 Development Plans place special emphasis on immigrants. The target is defined as "the share of immigrants among students in higher education to correspond to their share of the entire population" (Finnish Ministry of Education 2008: 47). The better inclusion of immigrants in higher education is considered essential especially considering the ageing population of Finland and the need for a highly qualified labour force.

One aspect in the application of the equality principle shall be highlighted. Finland has applied the equality principle rather strictly. Accordingly, there should not be any special treatment for any group, everybody shall access the same resources or receive the same rewards. This understanding was not inspiring for taking special measures depending on differences. This has not been a big problem for Finland which has had a rather homogenous

society until the 1990s. The linguistic minorities (e.g., Sami speaking people) and traditional ethnic minorities are mostly assimilated into the Finnish society. The immigrants' share in the population started to increase only after the 1990s (please see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 The Distribution of Population by Language in Finland (1980-2010)

	% Finnish speakers	% Swedish speakers	% Sami speakers	% Other languages	% Citizens of foreign countries
1980	93,25	6,26	0,03	0,19	0,27
1990	93,04	5,91	0,03	0,49	0,52
1995	91,70	5,68	0,03	1,27	1,32
2000	90,83	5,53	0,03	1,88	1,73
2005	89,76	5,39	0,03	2,69	2,12
2010	87,64	5,25	0,03	4,05	3,03

Source: Own calculations based on the Statistics Finland data, http://pxweb2.stat.fi/Dialog/Saveshow.asp

Clearly, the previous equality of opportunity understanding cannot achieve participative equity in a heterogeneous society. Considering this heterogeneity as a recent development, the adaptation to the new situation is a challenge. The rigid application of the equality principle has started to change. In the 2003-2008 Development Plan, the ministry stated that in order to secure equal opportunities for everyone, it is necessary to take measures targeting at less active groups (Finnish Ministry of Education 2004: 19). The ministry focuses on ensuring the access of "different learners, groups with different disabilities and students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (Finnish Ministry of Education 2008: 23).

6.1.4. Access Factors

As mentioned above, the social dimension has not attended all access factors. The issues concerning the size and structure of higher education system, the pre-higher education system (in relation to admission)[44] and the cost of higher education are discussed as essential factors and background information.

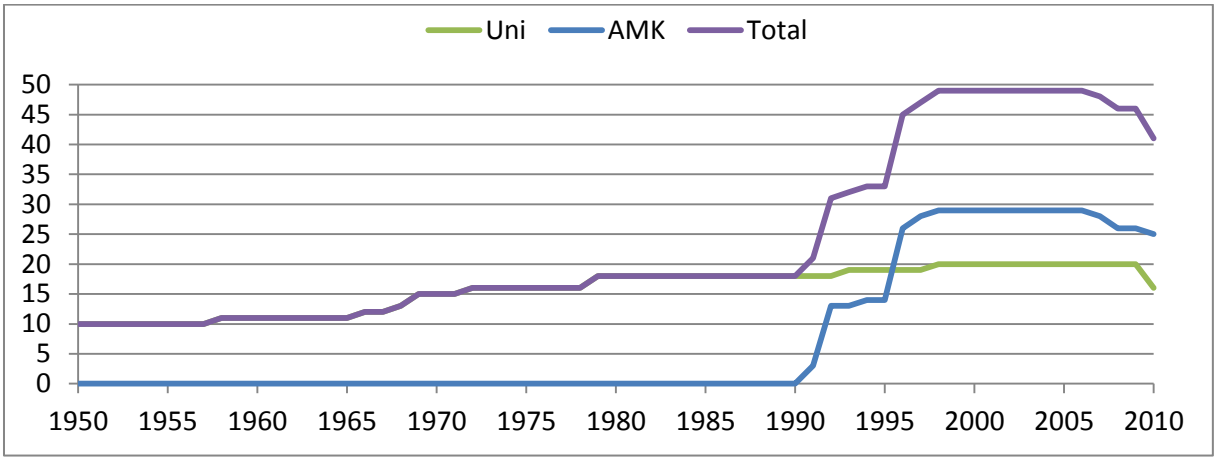
6.1.4.1. The Size and Structure of the Higher Education System

Finland has a small population size (ca. 5.300.000) in a relatively large area and has a widespread higher education network in order to ensure access for all. There are 16 universities and 25 AMKs[45] by 2010. As could be seen in Figure 6.1, Finland has had a steady increase in the number of universities. In the 1990s, with the establishment of the non-university sector, the number of institutions boosted. In January 2010, as a result of mergers between higher education institutions, the number of universities reduced from 20 to 16. The mergers started earlier within the AMK sector. Their numbers reduced from 29 in 2000 to 25 in 2010. The decision to merge came from the higher education institutions as a reaction to the recent reforms in governance and funding of higher education.

[44] This factor is discussed as part of the admission mechanisms in the previous chapter. Since the social dimension does not include it, it is provided as background information for the national case studies.

[45] In addition to these, there are two other AMKs which are not subject to the Finnish Ministry of Education: Åland University of Applied Sciences run by the autonomous Province of Åland and the Police College by the Ministry of the Interior.

Figure 6.1 The Number of Universities and AMKs in Finland (1950-2010)



Source: Ministry of Education 2009 "Higher Education Institutions" and websites of individual universities and AMKs

As mentioned above, Finland has a binary higher education structure: universities, which grant degrees in all three cycles and the AMKs which grant degrees only for the first and the second cycle. While universities provide academic or artistic education, the AMKs are labour market oriented and provide work related education. The distribution of the student body between the two sectors is rather balanced. Universities have ca. 56% and AMKs have ca. 44% of higher education students. There is an increasing trend in the share of AMK students.

An even development of the higher education system, in order to ensure equal opportunities for all citizens, has been the underlining idea in Finland. In this sense, the policies did not endorse a vertical differentiation of the system. The development of a dense higher education network resulted in a big higher education sector offering many study places. This is often suggested as one of the reasons for the high participation rates in Finland.

The Availability of Private Higher Education

A sectoral division can be observed in the provision of private higher education. All universities have traditionally been public institutions. Only in 2010, two private universities were established in Finland. Almost all AMKs are privately owned. Out of 25 AMKs, four are run by local authorities (public), seven by municipal education consortia and 14 by private companies.

6.1.4.2. The Pre-higher Education System

In Finland, primary education is compulsory and lasts on average nine years, from 7 to 16 years of age. Secondary education lasts on average three years and is divided into two sectors: general and vocational education. Graduates of both sectors are eligible for both sectors of higher education. The sectoral differentiation does not bring additional admission requirements.

The equality principle is reflected in the development of primary and secondary education as well. According to UNESCO data on the net enrolment rate[46] in secondary education almost the entire official age cohort participates in secondary education.

[46] The net enrolment rate is defined as "enrolment of the official age group for a given level of education expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population". UNESCO Glossary http://glossary.uis.unesco.org/glossary/en/home.

Table 6.3 Net Enrolment Rate in Secondary School in Finland. All Programmes (2000-2010)

Years	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Net Enrolment Rate	95	94	95	95	95	95	96	96	95	94

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, http://stats.uis.unesco.org/

The school system has been developed evenly throughout the country. As it has been shown by the results of the PISA surveys, Finland has high levels of success among secondary school pupils. It is not possible to observe different levels of achievement due to the differences in the quality or availability of secondary education by region in Finland.

Nine years of comprehensive primary education is followed by secondary education which is divided into two sectors: the general and the vocational. There is a tendency of deciding the type of secondary education based on primary school grades: higher grades lead to general education, lower grades lead to vocational education. This is criticised for not including further determinants in the selection process. In many cases pupils from immigrant backgrounds, who tend to have lower school grades, choose the vocational sector and might not prefer to continue to higher education (SA interview 2009). Nevertheless, in the last five years, this pattern has started to change due to the increasing popularity of vocational education (JV interview 2009). Despite this criticism, Finland has advantages with its flexible and longer comprehensive schooling system.

6.1.4.3. The Cost of Education

In Finland all levels of education are free of charge for Finnish citizens. Despite being privately owned the AMKs do not charge tuition fees either. The entrance examinations are also free of charge. The new Universities Act (2009) allows higher education institutions to charge tuition fees to non-EU/EEA students at the master's level studies which are thought in a foreign language (i.e., other than Finnish or Swedish). In 2009, with an amendment in the AMK Act, the AMKs are also allowed to charge tuition fees to non-EU/EEA students at the master's level studies which are thought in a foreign language. The tuition fee application was started in January 2010 and is going to continue until December 2014 on a trial basis. Student unions criticise the reform as being market oriented and creating inequality in access for international students (SYL 1, 2, SAMOK interview 2009). A further criticism against the reform concerns the principle of equity and free education. The introduction of tuition fees even for a limited group means the demolishment of the equity principle and carries the risk of paving the way for the introduction of tuition fees to Finns as well (SYL2 interview 2009). According to the Ministry of Education, the introduction of tuition fees is necessary to support universities in their international and mobility programmes (ME1 interview 2009).

All interviewees stated free education at all levels as the main enabling mechanism for the relatively high participative equity in Finland. This system ensures the continuity of equal opportunities through all levels of education. This is an important success factor, considering the effect of school attainment on participation in higher education. The principle is highly supported by student unions, academic staff, the ministry and all political parties. In line with it, the development of for-profit private higher education is not supported by public policies in Finland. It shall be noted that recent amendments in the legislation are hinting a change in this understanding.

6.1.5. Explaining the Social Dimension in Finland

The social dimension understanding in Finland is researched in the biannual national reports produced for the Bologna Process, actions taken by the Ministry of Education in the context of the Bologna Process reforms and the interviews.

6.1.5.1. The Awareness of the Social Dimension

The 2001-2002 National Report of Finland does not include the social dimension. The template for the 2003-2005 National Report specifically asks about the measures to promote equality of access to higher education in relation to the social dimension. The section describes the availability of study places and student services in this context (Lehikoinen 2005: 8). The description focuses on the opportunities to promote the access of underrepresented groups. The template for the 2005-2007 National Report specifically asks about measures for "widening access to quality higher education" and completing higher education studies. In this sense, the report mentions existing measures to widen access (i.e., geographical extensity and the recognition of prior learning) and student services. The template for the 2007-2009 National Report has a special section on the social dimension. The Finnish report recognises the existence of underrepresented groups and lists available measures to promote the participation of these groups. However, there is not any action plan included. By looking at these documents, it is possible to observe a social dimension understanding close to the one defined at the Bologna level.

All interviews carried out in Finland affirmed that the issues relevant for the social dimension have traditionally been concerns both for the society and policy makers. The development plans of the government and relevant higher education legislation state ensuring equality in higher education as one of the primary concerns (cf. Development Plans 2003-2008 and 2007-2012). In this sense, increasing the participation of the underrepresented groups in higher education is acknowledged. Yet, within the Bologna Process context, it is not possible to see the social dimension as a primary concern. As mentioned above, Finland focused on the degree structure, quality assurance, mobility and lifelong learning action areas of the Bologna Process and mostly took the structural measures. The social dimension of the Bologna Process has not been a high agenda item in the national Bologna agenda and did not bring any new element to this area. As the Ministry of Education representatives stated (ME1 interview 2009), the inclusion of the social dimension in the Bologna Process increased the attention paid to these issues at the international level and acknowledged the relatively good status of Finland in these areas. The interviewees also added that, if the aim is the creation of a common European Higher Education Area, it is necessary to ensure the improvement of the socio-economic situation of all students in it. The balanced and good situation of students in all countries would enable a sustainable and a healthy functioning common area (ME1 interview 2009). In this sense, further development of the social dimension at the Bologna level is supported.

In addition to this, the actions for monitoring of the social dimension relevant issues are considered as an indicator of awareness. In Finland, since 1989 the Student Research Foundation (*Opiskelijajärjestöjen tutkimussäätiö - OTUS*) collects data on a variety of socio-economic indicators concerning the wellbeing of higher education students on a continuous basis. The student unions shape policy making processes with the information they provide. The OTUS is part of the student unions and works in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. Finland also participates in the EUROStudent survey. The existence of data

collection practices also suggests an awareness and concern on social dimension relevant issues.

The Role of the Student Unions

Participative equity in higher education and the availability of a better study environment issues have direct influence on students. Therefore, the student unions' role in policy making and implementation processes is necessary to comment on. Student involvement in Finland has a long tradition and an advanced level of development. There are two types of student unions at the national level: the National Union of Students in Finland (*Suomen ylioppilaskuntien liitto - SYL*) for the university students and the National Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (*Suomen ammattikorkeakouluopiskelijakuntien liitto - SAMOK*) for the AMK students. The SYL and the SAMOK are umbrella organisations of the local student unions at the national level. While all university students are obliged to become members of the local student union according to the Universities Act, the membership for the local SAMOK branches is on a voluntary basis. The governing committees of the local and national student unions are formed based on the results of independent elections.

Both student unions actively participate in decision making bodies at the faculty and institutional level, as well as in ministerial working groups. They participate in working groups on equal footing and consider themselves as responsible bodies in policy development and implementation (SYL1 interview 2009). Through their local branches, they effectively disseminate information and can raise awareness on issues. As stated in the interviews with the representatives of student unions, this decreases the risk of student protests due to not understanding the reforms (SYL1 interview 2009, SYL2 interview 2009 and SAMOK interview 2009). Both student unions are included in the national Bologna Follow-up groups and are members of the ESU. The active participation of student unions in higher education policy making is secured both legally and financially. The financial support of the state is identified as an important means for the development of the student unions and the promotion of student involvement in policy making processes during interviews with Finnish student unions.

The interviews revealed that although the relevant items of the social dimension have traditionally been primary concerns for both unions, within the Bologna context it is not the primary action area. This would not mean the lack of support of the student unions for the social dimension. Student unions actively work on and support the promotion of participative equity through increasing opportunities for disadvantaged groups, measures against discrimination, financial support for students and campaigning against the application of tuition fees.

6.1.5.2. Goal Indicators

To remind, the main strategic goal of the social dimension is defined as reflecting the diversity of population on the student body. A better inclusion of underrepresented groups lies in the centre of this goal. In the 2007-2009 National Report, main underrepresented groups in higher education are identified as people from lower socio-economic and immigrant backgrounds (Vuorinen 2008: 56). In addition to these groups, international students, students with children and people with disabilities are identified as underrepresented groups during the interviews (ME1 interview 2009, SAMOK interview 2009, SYL1 interview 2009, SYL2 interview 2009, SYL3 interview 2009).

Access

Various research results have proven that Finland has the most inclusive higher education system in Europe (cf. Koucky *et al*. 2009, Orr *et al*. 2008). According to the OECD data[47] in 2000-2007, the percentage of first time entrants in tertiary education in the corresponding age group has been around 73% in Finland. There has not been a significant change in these percentages. According to the same data, the majority of the higher education students in Finland are female. The underrepresentation of males in higher education is a fact and concern for policy makers.

Kivinen et al. (2001) discuss the persistence of inequalities in access to higher education depending on the socio-economic background of people despite the massification of higher education in Finland, which is a common phenomenon in all massified systems. Although there is no available data, during the interviews with different policy actors and in the 2007-2009 National Report, people from immigrant backgrounds are stated as another big underrepresented group in Finland and this situation is a policy concern. The insufficient level of Finnish language knowledge is stated as a reason for the underrepresentation of people from immigrant backgrounds (Vuorinen 2008: 56). In Finland, the registration of information on ethnicity is not allowed by law. In a similar way, no data is collected on students with disabilities. Access to higher education from remote areas is not considered as a problem in Finland due to the large and widespread network of institutions. Regarding the reflection of societal diversity in the student body, students with children are also listed as an underrepresented group. As mentioned before, this group can be considered as a special disadvantaged group. Different from other underrepresented groups, their difficulties are not related to their inherited attributes but to the inflexibility of study modes and the lack of services addressing their special needs.

Completion

Concerning the completion of studies, a change should be highlighted. Before the change of the degree structure, students in Finnish higher education institutions were allowed to study as long as they want. This situation has changed recently with the Bologna reforms. Now, students need to finish their studies in 10 years (Saarivirta 2010: 360).

According to OECD data, graduation rates have increased from 40% in 2000 to 48% in 2007 for tertiary type A in Finland. However, it should be noted that there has been changes in the definition of the ISCED 5A group and hence, it is difficult to draw conclusions considering changes in graduation rates. In addition to this, there is no information available on the graduation rates of people from underrepresented groups.

6.1.5.3. The Social Dimension Means

The Admission Mechanism

Admission mechanism is discussed with respect to regulations and recognition tools, such as the recognition of prior learning and national qualifications framework in the social dimension context.

In Finland, both general and vocational secondary school graduates are eligible for both sectors of higher education. The matriculation examination in the end of general secondary

[47] OECD Stat (2010) http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/tertiary-education-entry-rates_20755120-table2

education, an AMK degree[48], a "higher vocational qualification, a vocational upper secondary qualification, a vocational qualification awarded on the completion of education of at least three years in duration, a foreign degree or qualification which gives eligibility for higher education in the awarding country, or whom the university otherwise deems to have sufficient knowledge and skills for the studies" give the required eligibility for university admission (Universities Act 1997). The Universities Act 2009 added corresponding "prior qualifications" to these criteria. The same eligibility criteria are valid for the AMKs (AMK Act 2003). All higher education institutions decide on their selection criteria. While universities administer their own admission exam procedure, the application to the AMKs is administered by a national application system. There is a *numerus clausus* restriction for all study programmes.

Table 6.4 Applications and Admissions in Universities in Finland (1999-2008)

	Number of applications	Number of exam candidates	% of exam candidates in applicants	Number of admissions	% of admissions in applicants
1999	106510	62478	59	25517	24
2001	108582	66109	61	28483	26
2003	110564	68778	62	28176	25
2005	164619	96997	59	30492	19
2007	161520	96169	60	29899	19
2008	159497	94940	60	30484	19
Data since 2005 are not fully commensurate with earlier data. Since 2005 the data include a person's all applications, entrance examinations and admissions. Previously a person was included in statistics only once per university field of education					

Source: Finnish Ministry of Education 2009, *Higher Education Institutions 2009*

While the AMKs do not have any admission bottleneck, as could be seen in Table 6.4, this is not the situation for universities. Universities admit only around one fifth of the applications. Each year, the applicants for universities outnumber the pupils matriculated from secondary education in that year (SA interview 2009, ME1 interview 2009). There is a fierce competition in the entrance exams especially for some programmes, e.g., law, medicine and business administration. This situation resulted in the development of private institutions training students for the institutional entrance exams. The high cost of these courses (in some cases up to 6,000 €) hampers participative equity which seeks for academic capacities rather than for financial capacities (SA interview 2009, ME1 interview 2009). The bottleneck in admission exams due to the excess demand for certain fields of studies and accompanying inequality due to the high cost of private training for entrance exams are in the Finnish Ministry of Education's policy agenda. The introduction of a national level mechanism both for universities and the AMKs which would take into account only the results of the matriculation exam or vocational qualification certificate is thought as a solution. Streamlining the admission mechanism is expected to minimize the area for private institutions, as well as increasing enrolment rates which shall accelerate the transition to the labour market (Finnish Ministry of Education 2006: 5). Such an admission mechanism would

[48] This criterion is not included in the Universities Act 2009.

however, bring along all disadvantages of a strictly merit based system, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Some exceptions in admission requirements are possible for minority language groups, e.g., Sami speaking people (Vuorinen 2008: 57). The ministry also tries to address the difficulties of immigrant applicants in entrance exams due to insufficient language skills. There is a working group analysing the possibility of making some exceptions for those applicants. The ministry encourages higher education institutions to develop admission requirements that would enable the recruitment of non-Finnish and immigrant applicants. This can be through the utilisation of internationally accepted language tests and the development of selection mechanisms and services for foreign-language students (The Finnish Ministry of Education n.d.: 24). However, taking measures can be problematic considering the equality principle tradition.

In Finland, relevant legislation allows the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in both sectors of higher education. Prior learning can be recognised for access and the exemption of courses depending on the discretion of the higher education institution. The existence of certain obstacles concerning the access of applicants from non-traditional educational backgrounds is stated in the national reports for the Bologna Process. Obstacles are generally related to the recognition of prior learning as a basis of access and finding financial aid during studies, especially for mature students (Lehikoinen 2006: 12). A ministerial working group is tackling the issue to guide higher education institutions better. According to the EURO Student III data[49], 3% of higher education students access through non-traditional educational routes. Non-traditional routes are defined as "access to higher education through the validation of prior learning and experience - with or without a higher education entrance examination" (Orr *et al*. 2008: 40-41).

The development of national qualifications framework is expected to increase transparency of the admission requirements as well as to promote recognition of prior learning. In 2005, the Ministry of Education appointed a working group which prepared a proposal for higher education qualifications based on the European Qualifications Framework in 2005 (Lehikoinen 2006: 4). The framework is based on learning outcomes and the ECTS which are divided into knowledge, skills and competencies (Finish Ministry of Education website 2005). In 2009, the ministry appointed another working group to prepare a national qualifications framework for all levels (Vuorinen 2008: 19). The work continues at the institutional level.

Concerning the admission requirements, the inclusion of corresponding prior qualifications is a measure taken to promote the recognition of prior learning which primarily relates to lifelong learning; similar to the situation with qualifications frameworks. The other measures concerning better inclusion of linguistic minorities and immigrants can be considered the social dimension relates but not stated to be so.

Variety of Learning Provisions

Concerning the variety of study programmes and provisions, the social dimension includes the adoption of two cycle degree structures, curriculum reform and modularisations, the use

[49] It should be reminded that the representativeness of the EURO Student dataset is uncertain and in this sense, this information should only be considered as an approximation. For further criticisms of the data, please see Chapter 4.

of ECTS and qualifications framework (already covered above) and provision of various study modes, i.e., distance education, e-learning and part-time studies, etc..

The two cycle degree structure is adopted in 2005. Since then, all programmes are gradually transitioning. In 2008, 98% of the students below the doctoral level are enrolled in the two cycle system (Vuorinen 2008: 7). With the adoption of the credit system in the 1970s, the modularisation of study programmes became possible (Finnish Ministry of Education 2003: 3). At the moment, all degree programmes are modularised. Finland already had a credit system based on student workload. In 2005, an ECTS compatible system linked to learning outcomes has started to be used in all higher education institutions in all study programmes (Lehikoinen 2006:9).

In Finland, different study modes are offered mostly by the AMKs and tailored for non-traditional student groups, e.g., special programmes for people with employment and mature students. Universities do not have such specific programmes, but "offer fee charging continuing education and open university instruction" (Vuorinen 2008: 45). In addition to this, university students are allowed to attend modules in other universities (ibid.)

Open education is available in both sectors of higher education and "offer courses and modules for all interested people regardless of their educational background" (Finnish Ministry of Education 2003: 3). Open education students are charged fees, which are decided by the respective higher education institution. Open education does not lead to a degree; nevertheless, the earned credits are transferable to a degree programme. Students should apply for this transfer. The studies are part-time. 15 universities[50] "provide Open University education to promote educational and regional equality". In a similar way, the AMKs provide Open Studies. Open Studies[51] are mostly web-based, but also include direct contact learning and blended learning. All AMKs offer open education.

Virtual open learning environments are also available in both sectors of higher education (Vuorinen 2008: 45). The Finnish Virtual University (*Suomen virtuaaliyliopisto*)[52] is a network of all universities and the Finnish Online University of Applied Sciences (*Suomen Virtuaaliammattikorkeakoulu*)[53] is a network of all AMKs. These collaborations provide wider study options for students so that they are not limited to the courses offered in their higher education institution. These provisions aim at promoting the participation of adult learners in higher education. Flexible learning offers are mostly considered as means of lifelong learning.

Most of the measures for variety of study provisions have already existed in Finland. The changes, such as the adoption of the two cycle degree structure, the ECTS and national qualifications framework, happened mainly in relation to the structural reform suggestions of the Bologna Process.

Student Services

In Finland, student services are arranged by the student unions (SYL and SAMOK), the Ministry of Education and the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (*Kansaneläkelaitos* -

[50] Please see the Open University website, http://www.avoinyliopisto.fi/Page/480286bc-e9e6-46bb-8c1e-80744b64235e

[51] Please see Open Studies website, http://www.amk.fi/avoin/en/index.html

[52] http://www.virtuaaliyliopisto.fi/

[53] http://www.amk.fi/

KELA). Each institution provides some part of the student services discussed within the context of this research.

Guidance and Counselling

The Finnish Ministry of Education considers better counselling activities during secondary and primary education as one of the main ways to increase the participation of children from immigrant backgrounds and supports actions taken to this end. Furthermore, the provision of more transparent and clearer information for applicants is a recognised need by the ministry. Counselling and guidance are also considered as important measures for retention and shortening study periods (Finnish Ministry of Education 2008: 28). The ministry paid special attention to this issue and in 1998, it appointed an expert group to analyse the impact of guidance. The experts concluded that "guidance is one of the key factors [...] in promoting relevant individual learning programmes and monitoring the completion of studies" (Moitus & Vuorinen 2003: 160). The internationalisation strategy of the ministry requires higher education institutions to ensure resources for study counselling services for students with non-Finnish and immigrant backgrounds. Counselling and support for studies as well as facilities for free time activities are provided by the collaboration of student organisations and higher education institutions. (The Finnish Ministry of Education n.d.: 20). One setback in addressing the need for better guidance and counselling at the pre-higher education level is due to a structural reason. This level of education is a municipal level responsibility. Hence, it is difficult to develop a national level action for it (SYL1 interview 2009).

Career guidance and counselling are provided mainly by two public systems: student counselling is offered by the public education system and information, guidance and counselling services are provided by the public labour administration. Higher education institutions provide educational guidance as well as career guidance through their student affairs offices and web sites. Another common way of providing guidance, especially in universities, is peer-tutoring. The organisation of these services changes depending on the higher education institution (Moitus & Vuorinen 2003: 162). Similar services are provided by the student unions as well.

Together with the change of degree structures and the curriculum reform, since 2006 students are asked to prepare personal study plans. These plans are prepared and revised with the support of a tutor. Students have educational counselling during their studies in order to complete their studies successfully (Lehikoinen 2006: 14). This measure is taken by the Ministry of Education to make studies more student-centred and hence to shorten study periods.

According to the Independent Assessment Report of the Bologna Process, (CHEPS, ECOTEC & INCHER 2010a: 56) i. educational, ii. psychological, iii. disability and iv. career counselling and guidance services are widely available at a reasonable quality in Finland. According to a survey carried out with the participation of 25 higher education institutions in 2000-2001 by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, the "institutions had a fairly large number of guidance and advisory personnel" and "the physical guidance facilities were excellent in the institutions visited" (Moitus & Vuorinen 2003: 168).

Financial Support

In Finland, the KELA distributes student financial aid. All full-time students who are citizens of Finland and in need of financial support can receive financial aid independent of their socio-economic background and independent of parents' income. Foreigners coming to

Finland to study are not entitled to student financial aid. Yet, foreigners with a habitual residence permit and being in the country for other purposes than studying can receive financial aid. According to the recent amendment in the Student Financial Aid Act, "a citizen of a third country who has resided in another Member State for a long time and moves to Finland and is granted a continuous residence permit is entitled to student financial aid". Another recent amendment enables citizens of other European Union States who resided in Finland continuously for five years to enjoy the same entitlements as Finnish citizens (Vuorinen 2008: 49).

Student financial aid has three components: grants, loans and housing supplements. 88% of this financial aid is non-repayable. The amount of the study grant is decided based on age, marital status, type of accommodation, educational institution and financial circumstances. Students who started their studies in 2005/2006 can receive financial aid for a maximum of 70 months and who started before this year can receive for a maximum of 55 months. For the AMKs, the maximum amount of time is 55, 50 or 45 months. The aid is linked to the amount of the ECTS credits gained in a semester (min. 60 ECTS) (KELA 2010: 370). Students under 17 cannot receive a study grant, since they are covered by the child benefit scheme. As can be seen in Table 6.5, the average amount of aid has been increasing steadily, though being criticised by students due to not being increased as much as the inflation rate.

Table 6.5 Average Amount of Student Financial Aid in Finland, €/month (2000-2010)

	Aid excl. loan guarantees	**Aid** incl. loan guarantees	**Study grant**	**Housing suppl.**	**Aid** excl. loan guarantees	**Aid** incl. loan guarantees	**Study grant**	**Housing suppl.**
	nominal				2010 prices			
2000	283.6	515.3	200.9	150.3	332.1	603.4	235.2	175.9
2001	292.8	522.7	202.6	153	337.3	602.2	233.5	176.1
2002	296.8	529.9	204.5	155.2	336.3	600.4	232.3	175.6
2003	301.7	556.8	206.8	157.2	340	627.5	233.3	177.2
2004	306.9	561.8	209	158.4	344.3	630.3	234.5	177.7
2005	322.6	638.2	210.6	178.5	358.1	708.4	233.8	198.1
2006	325.9	642.4	212.2	181.7	353.9	697.7	230.4	197.3
2007	321.6	645.7	209.2	184	340.6	683.8	221.5	194.9
2008	347.6	704.7	236.9	185.9	355.6	720.9	242.3	190.2
2009	346.9	706.4	233.5	188.9	357	726.9	240.3	194.4
2010	347.6	705.9	232.9	190.1	347.6	705.9	232.9	190.1

Source: KELA 2010, Statistical Yearbook 2010, p. 301

The state guarantees a student loan up to 300€ per month and the terms and conditions of the loan are agreed between a bank and the student. However, many students prefer to take the grant and the housing supplement but not the loan. Instead, they work to earn additional

income. 44% of the students work during their studies. The housing supplement can be up to 80% of the accommodation costs (KELA website[54])

As can be seen in Table 6.6, around half of the higher education students receive financial aid from the state. The table also shows that the percentage of AMK students receiving financial aid is significantly higher than the percentage of university students receiving aid. In Finland, state financial aid composes a substantial amount of the student budget. According to EUROStudent III data, state financial aid amounts for 40% of the monthly student budget in Finland (Orr et al. 2008: 93).

Table 6.6 Number and Percentage of Students Receiving Financial Aid in Finland, by Type of Higher Education Institution (2000-2010)

Year	Number of financial aid recipients in universities	% of university students receiving financial aid	Number of financial aid recipients in AMKs	% of AMK students receiving financial aid
2000/2001	80131	51,03	85685	75,07
2001/2002	81725	50,26	87073	71,69
2002/2003	84461	49,75	87622	69,26
2003/2004	86156	49,59	87253	67,29
2004/2005	86988	49,98	87103	66,23
2005/2006	86751	49,34	86172	65,13
2006/2007	85654	48,51	84284	63,82
2007/2008	84227	47,77	82674	62,26
2008/2009	81871	49,90	82522	62,51
2009/2010	84867	50,37	84753	Data not available

Source: Adopted from KELA and KOTA Statistics[55]

Disabled or chronically ill people aged 16 years or over are entitled to disability allowance to meet their need for assistance and additional expenses. In addition to the common benefits disabled people get from the KELA, there is also a special allowance for disabled people to study (KELA 2009).

In Finland, around 8% of all students have children (Finnish Ministry of Education 2008: 66). There are different financial aids, i.e. Maternity Grant, Paternal Allowance and Child Allowance, available for everyone with children. Since student financial aid is provided on the basis of equality, it cannot be sufficient for students with dependent children. The problems of students with children concerning the lack of financial aid and day care centres

[54] KELA website http://kela.fi/in/internet/english.nsf/NET/090702145226MH?OpenDocument

[55] https://kotayksi.csc.fi/online/Haku.do and http://kela.fi/it/kelasto/kelasto.nsf/alias/Yearbook_09_pdf/$File/Yearbook_09.pdf?OpenElement

are raised by the student unions. At the moment, there is a working group in the ministry focusing on measures, such as increasing the amount of aid for students with children and providing additional services from municipalities or higher education institutions for day care centres to improve the situation (RM interview 2009).

Another special type of financial aid is for adult students who interrupted their employment for full time higher education studies. The amount of the aid is based on the previous income before starting the higher education studies (Finnish Ministry of Education 2006: 16).

General Student Services

In Finland, affordable student accommodation is provided by independent foundations in all cities. The student unions organise this service. The support for student housing is also provided through the before mentioned housing allowances. Students also have subsidies for food and national and local transportation. In addition to this, all higher education institutions provide students with library and further study environment facilities, as well as facilities for sports and cultural activities.

In Finland, the Finnish Student Health Service (*Ylioppilaiden terveydenhoitosäätiö - YTHS*) provides special health care service, including mental health care, for university students. This service is organised by the SYL for university students. The YTHS covers 16 cities and in towns where universities have ancillary branches, the services of YTHS are purchased from local providers. The provision of health services for AMK students is under the responsibility of municipalities. People with disabilities receive help, special treatment through state health service, whether they are students or not.

It shall be noted that the health care system is very well developed in Finland and everyone, whether student or not, is entitled to almost the same health care.

Other Means

In Finland, different educational programmes are introduced to address the obstacles of people from immigrant backgrounds and people with disabilities. One of them is a special training year for prospective AMK students. Since 2009, the AMKs "may provide education for immigrants free of charge with a view to providing the student with language proficiency and other knowledge and skills needed for studies at the polytechnic" (AMK Act 2003). The training year aims at supporting applicants from immigrant backgrounds to gain sufficient skills for studying in an AMK successfully. The pilot of the training programme started on initiation of the AMKs and resulted in an amendment in the AMK Act to become a permanent practice. Similar kinds of trainings have been implemented already in primary and secondary education for a long time (ME1 interview 2009).

The AMKs have an advantage in overcoming the language obstacle in participation in higher education. The majority of English tuition programmes in the first cycle are offered in the non-university sector. English tuition programmes in universities are mostly available at the master's and doctorate level (ME1 interview 2009). In addition to this, free language courses are available for all immigrants, not only for higher education students.

Finnish government also introduced a Migration Policy Programme in 2006 to promote the development of multiculturalism and non-discrimination in Finnish society. The programme also supports the provision of Finnish and Swedish language education for immigrants. (Vuorinen 2008: 58)

In Finland, the Inclusive Higher Education Project (*Esteetön opiskelu korkea-asteen oppilaitoksissa - ESOK*) has an emphasis on the removal of physical, psychological and social obstacles for the participation in higher education. The main target groups of the project are students with disabilities and learning difficulties. The ESOK guidelines for higher education institutions cover issues such as accessibility in entrance exams, diversity of needs in education, staff training, etc. (ESOK 2009).

As can be seen most of the student services were in place in Finland. Concerning counselling personal study plans is a new development. This measure is introduced in relation to change of degree structures and to shorten studies. All other measures taken to increase participation of underrepresented groups mostly relate to existing concerns in higher education in Finland rather than being the social dimension raised issues.

6.1.6. Conclusion

The social dimension is defined in the national reports for the Bologna Process with respect to availability of study places, student services and better inclusion of the underrepresented groups in higher education, which belong to the main themes of the social dimension. The interviews also showed a high level of awareness on the social dimension relevant issues. Achieving participative equity has traditionally been a policy concern in Finland. The role of the student unions is also acknowledged in this sense. Policies regarding the size and structure of the system, pre-higher education structures and the cost of education have been promoting equality in access and progress in higher education. Especially free education at all levels, the large capacity of the system relative to the population and evenly developed high quality secondary education are important factors. Before the social dimension, there were policies and structures available targeting at the same goals. The political and social awareness were present as well. However, the social dimension has not had a priority in the national Bologna Process agenda. It was also not observable in the ministry's website as an item of the Bologna Process to be acted on.

Considering the indicators of access and completion, the lack of data limits possible conclusions. As for access, the entry rates have been high and continue to be high, apart from a slight decrease. It was not possible to find data on completion, dropout or retention rates. Still, the change of degree structures is expected to increase dropout rates. There is no data available on the participation of underrepresented groups in Finland.

Concerning admission mechanisms, Finland has had an admission system mostly based on formal entry qualifications. The ministry took actions for more permeability in admission for language related issues and for the recognition of prior learning. Variable learning modes (open education, e-learning) are traditionally offered in Finland. Modularised study programmes were also present. The adoption of two cycle degree structure, the use of the ECTS and the development of national qualifications framework are the Bologna Process reforms made during the last decade. With the change of degree structures a new guidance mechanism is introduced (i.e., personal study plans) in order to support the completion of studies. Apart from these, special programmes are launched for people from immigrant background for the vocational sector (the AMKs) and people with disabilities during the last decade, however without a clear connection to the social dimension. In conclusion, there are various applications that relate to the social dimension of the Bologna Process; however, it is not possible to observe a policy or implementation change that happened directly as a result of the social dimension of the Bologna Process in Finland.

6.2. Germany

6.2.1. The Higher Education System

The higher education system in Germany is composed of universities, universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*), colleges of art and music (*Kunst- und Musikhochschulen*) and colleges of Pedagogy and Theology (*Pädagogische and Theologische Hochschulen*), which comprise the marginal section of the higher education system. The research focuses on the universities and *Fachhochschulen* as they comprise the biggest part of the system. Higher education institutions have autonomy in their internal administration and academic affairs.

The governance of the higher education system in Germany is rather complicated compared to the other two case study countries. Germany is a federal country, composed of 16 *Länder* which have the main responsibility for higher education. In this sense, policy making practices vary depending on the *Land*. Based on the interviews and the national experts' views it is possible to conclude that relevant actors are consulted in policy development processes in a more hierarchical structure. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung - BMBF*) is responsible only for providing general guidelines for access issues and the degree structure (higher education institutions still have some discretionary powers) and internationally relevant action schemes. The BMBF regulates higher education through the Framework Act for Higher Education (*Hochschulrahmengesetz*). Higher education institutions function under public law and are mainly funded by the respective *Länder* budgets. They can also receive additional funding from special programmes of the BMBF and the *Länder.*

At the federal level, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (*Kultusministerkonferenz - KMK*) and the German Rectors' Conference (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz - HRK*) are influential policy actors. The KMK coordinates higher education policies between the *Länder*. The HRK is an umbrella organisation of 263 institutions representing higher education institutions in Germany. In addition to this, the Science Council (*Wissenschaftsrat*) is an advisory body for matters in relation to science and education policies.

The case study is based on the general, federal level policies. In this sense, possible reflections of the social dimension are not researched in the policies of the 16 *Länder.* This decision is based on the research focus on system level developments. Moreover, the issues in relation to the social dimension, such as access and student financial aid, are still under the responsibility of the BMBF.

6.2.2. Involvement in the Bologna Process

Germany is a Bologna Process country since 1999. Indeed, Germany is one of the four pioneer countries of the Bologna Process, which also signed the Sorbonne Declaration in 1998. Since the early 1990s, the internationalisation of higher education has been a policy focus in Germany (cf. Hahn & Teichler 2005). During the last decade, this concern has been enhanced with the endeavour of increasing international competitiveness. The BMBF started to foster such initiatives in the end of the 1990s. Current policy instruments, e.g., the Excellence Initiative and the High-Tech-Strategy, show the motivation for ensuring competitiveness through excellence. Like in many other countries, the Bologna Process provided the opportunity for policy makers to solve the existing problems of the higher education systems, i.e., long study duration, high dropout rates and the lack of a quality assurance system (cf. Toens 2009 for a detailed discussion).

As mentioned above, even though the *Länder* are mainly responsible for higher education; in the Bologna Process context, it is the BMBF representing Germany instead of the 16 *Länder* ministries responsible for higher education. The Bologna Process is communicated by the German Bologna Follow-Up Group which is composed of the BMBF, the KMK, the HRK, the German Academic Exchange Service (*Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst*), the student union (*freier zusammenschluss von studentInnenschaften - fzs*), the Accreditation Council (*Akkreditierungsrat*), social partners and the German National Association for Student Affairs (*Deutsches Studentenwerk - DSW*) (Eurydice 2009: 269). The BMBF has a central role in the transmission of the reforms to the national level. There is also a Bologna experts team composed of 18 Bologna experts. The HRK established a "Bologna Centre", with the support of the BMBF. This centre was established as a successor of the Bologna Service Centre (2004) and the Bologna Competence Centre (2005). The project run in 2007-2010 to improve the understanding and support the implementation of the Bologna reforms among higher education institutions. The Bologna Centre functioned as a coordination unit to advice, to disseminate information, to share good practices and to organise events (HRK website n.d.[56]). The Bologna Process has been introduced in seminars, conferences and various publications.

The Bologna priority areas for Germany so far have been the degree structure, quality assurance, mobility and lifelong learning. A need for structural reform in the degree structure and the curriculum was already in the agenda of the KMK and the HRK since the 1990s. Recently, promoting excellence and quality assurance have been added to these concerns. These were the main reflections in the Bologna Process context, as well (Eurydice 2009: 38). Mobility and lifelong learning have been the other action areas that received attention. Accordingly, the adoption of the two-cycle system, change of curricula, the use of the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement and qualifications framework have been the main means that received attention in Germany.

6.2.3. Access Policies

Free access to higher education in line with the Humboldtian tradition has been one of the fundamental principles in the development of the higher education system in Germany. In the post-war era, the demand for higher education increased due to demographic changes, i.e., baby boom (Pritchard 1990: 71) and hence the demands for the democratisation of higher education. The first reaction to this demand was expanding higher education through enlarging the existing universities. This measure took place until the 1960s. The *Wissenschaftsrat* produced policy papers denouncing the establishment of elite universities (i.e., like Grand Ecolé in France) or the application of *numerous clauses* in admission unless there is high risk for the quality and advocated the establishment of new universities. In the 1960s, new universities were established (Pritchard 1990: 79). In addition to addressing the demand, the regionalisation of higher education became a driver of the expansion of higher education. Regionalisation was considered essential to ensure equal access opportunities to higher education (Eurydice 2009: 140).

In the 1960s, alternative forms of higher education provisions were discussed to absorb the demand. In 1968, the *Länder* governments decided to establish *Fachhochschulen*[57] as the non-university sector of higher education. *Fachhochschulen* were established by upgrading the former engineer and higher vocational schools and started to function in 1971. In the 1970s,

[56] HRK website http://www.hrk.de/eng/projekte_und_initiativen/2424.php

[57] Please see Teichler 1996 and Klumpp & Teichler 2008 for detailed discussions on the development of the *Fachhochschulen*.

98 *Fachhochschulen* were established which was a clear increase in the number of institutions and reflected on the entry rates (Teichler 1996: 122). In the same period, the idea of comprehensive universities (*Gesamthochschulen*) was also discussed and 11 comprehensive universities were established in the early 1970s in Hesse and North Rhine- Westphalia. The 1976 Framework Act for Higher Education described the comprehensive universities "as the basic model for the development of higher education" in the Federal Republic of Germany (Pritchard 1990: 101). According to this act, comprehensive universities were intended to promote equal opportunities "for less privileged social classes, regions and genders (and racial or religious groups, if these are relevant parameters)" (Pritchard 1990: 11) and to "bring much needed flexibility into the system by admitting applicants who do not have formal qualifications (*Abitur*)" and by offering the transferability of courses and flexible course structures (Pritchard 1990: 101-102). Although comprehensive universities did not become a widespread practice, they are considered to meet their founding intentions in their regions. To wit, they contributed to the regional equality of access to higher education and broadened access (Pritchard 1990: 209). In the 2000s the comprehensive universities have been transformed into universities.

In discussing the post-war era access policies in Germany, a parenthesis shall be made for the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In the GDR, the expansion of higher education had a different priority. The primary policy goal was ensuring the inclusion of workers' children in higher education. After the reunification in 1990, the West German higher education system is applied in East Germany. In the early 1990s, after the reunification of Germany, the regionalisation of higher education in the new German states became an important policy concern (Eurydice 2009: 140).

Ensuring the equality of opportunity in access to higher education has continued to be an essential component in policy development in the 1980s; however, not necessarily a primary concern. By the end of the 1990s, like many other West European countries, the ageing society, the importance of higher education graduates for the economy and increasing entry rates were important policy concerns. In 2002, the government set achieving a 40% entry rate as an official goal (Witte 2006: 202). In 2007, the federal and *Länder* governments agreed on a qualification initiative to increase the entry rate into tertiary education to 40% again (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 2). The weight of economic rationales in increasing the participation in higher education can be seen in the goals of the Higher Education Pact 2020 (Hochschulpakt 2020). The Higher Education Pact 2020 is a funding arrangement to address the increasing demand for study places. In 2007, the Federal Government and the *Länder* agreed on the Higher Education Pact in order to increase the entry rate to higher education and hence the number of highly qualified professionals demanded by the labour market. The programme created for about 90,000 additional study places in 2007-2010. This programme was extended as "Higher Education Pact II" for 2011- 2015. The Higher Education Pact II is expected to create study places for 275,000 additional students and to fund research projects supported by the German Research Foundation (overheads). The project also has a special emphasis on supporting East German *Länder* to balance the demographic changes. The BMBF aims at stopping the expected student enrolment decline in the new *Länder* and avoiding a possible burden of excess demand on the higher education institutions in the old *Länder* (BMBF website 2009).

There is also a policy concern for reducing the negative impact of the socio-economic background of people on their future. The provision of more and earlier educational

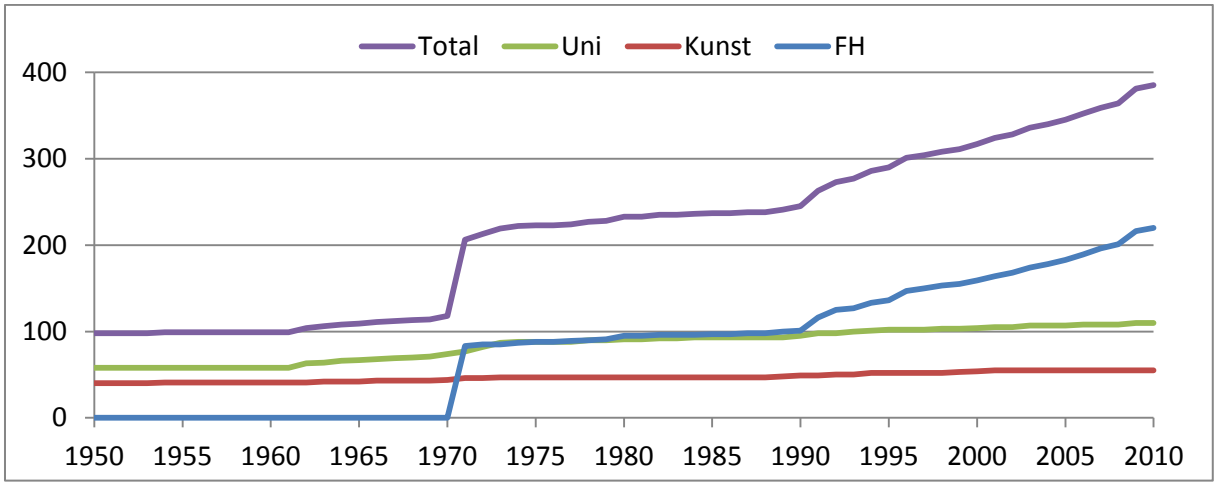
opportunities for children, in other words a "better education from the beginning" idea is promoted. The declaration of the prime ministers of all *Länder* and the federal government in Dresden is a sign of this rationale (Die Regierungschefs der Länder 2008).

6.2.4. Access Factors

6.2.4.1. The Size and Structure of the Higher Education System

Germany has a binary higher education system mainly composed of universities and *Fachhochschulen*. As can be seen in Figure 6.2, there has been a steady increase of higher education institutions with a booming period in the 1970s with the establishment of the *Fachhochschulen*.

Figure 6.2 Number of Higher Education Institutions in Germany (1950-2010)



Source: Created based on the statistical data on the HRK website, http://www.hochschulkompass.de/hochschulen.html

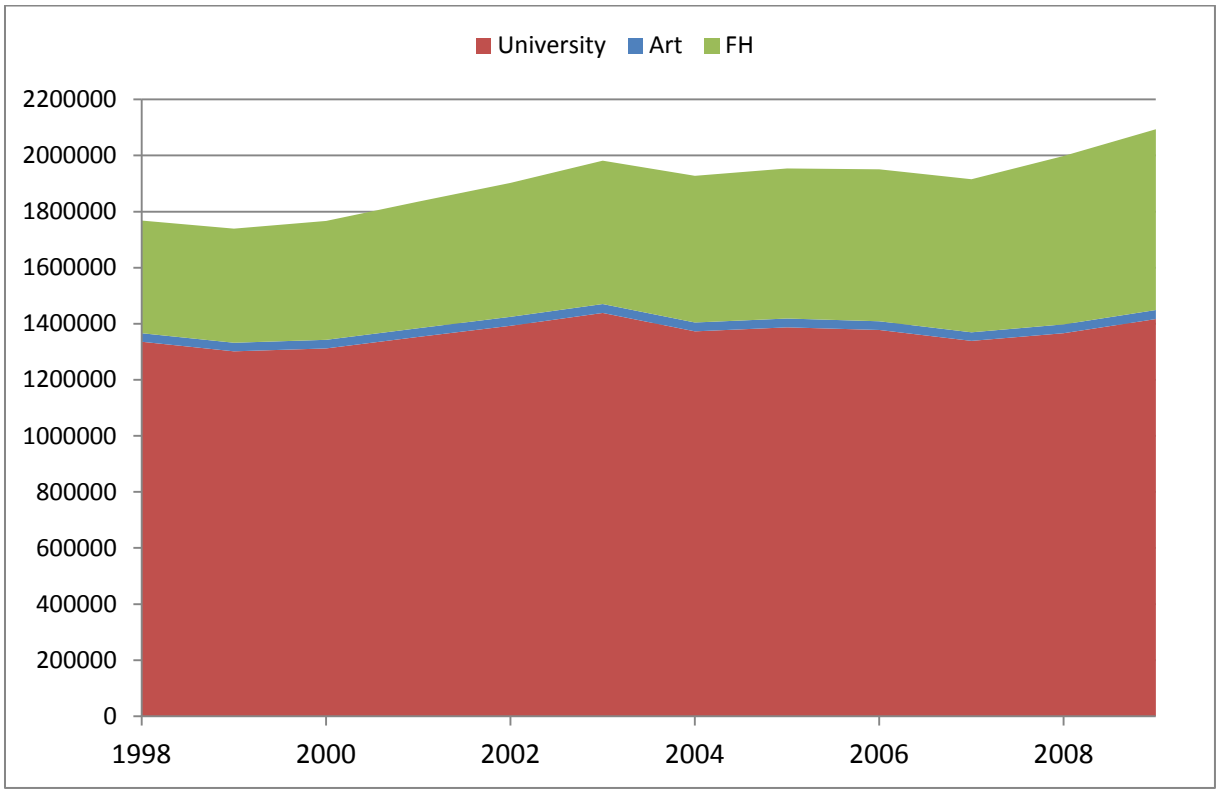
The post-secondary education system offers various parallel tracks in the higher education (university or *Fachhochschulen*) and non-higher education (e.g., *Berufsakademien*[58] and other tertiary education institutions) sector. The availability of parallel tracks is claimed to decrease the attractiveness of higher education. Moreover, university education means high opportunity costs with long duration and high risks, especially for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In Germany, university education tends to take longer[59] than the education in the non-university sectors. Furthermore, decisive examinations are in end of the education, which means high risks for families with scarce resources in case of failure (Meyer et al. 2007: 265). Conventionally, the *Fachhochschulen* are considered more open to people from lower socio-economic backgrounds within the higher education sector: "Access via the academic track leading to the universities instead of the intermediate track of secondary education ensured better opportunities for socially disadvantaged groups" (Klumpp & Teichler 2008: 107). However, in time the difference between the two sectors became smaller due to this very same situation. More and more students coming from the *Gymnasium* opted for *Fachhochschulen*. Klumpp and Teichler, observing the changes in the *Fachhochschulen* student body since their establishment, state that this sector did not achieve a substantial increase in its number of enrolments compared to universities or a substantial diversification

[58] Since 2008 some of the *Berufsakademien* are recognised as *Fachhochschule*, and as such are included in the higher education sector.

[59] This situation has started to change with the introduction of the two cycle degree structure.

of the student body, i.e., its student composition "became more similar to that at universities in two respects: a higher proportion of them were qualified as well to enrol at universities, and the proportion among them grew substantially whose parents were higher-education trained" (2008: 119). The application of high admission criteria in *Fachhochschulen* unlike universities (except some cases of *numerous clauses*) is also stated as a reason for increasing the percentage of *Abitur* holders in *Fachhochschulen* (Witte 2006: 160). Furthermore, as can be seen in Figure 6.3, the *Fachhochschulen* have remained minor with respect to their student numbers. In the end, the *Fachhochschulen* could not really meet the ends of increasing the participation of people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Figure 6.3 Number of Students by Type of Higher Education Institution in Germany (1998-2009)



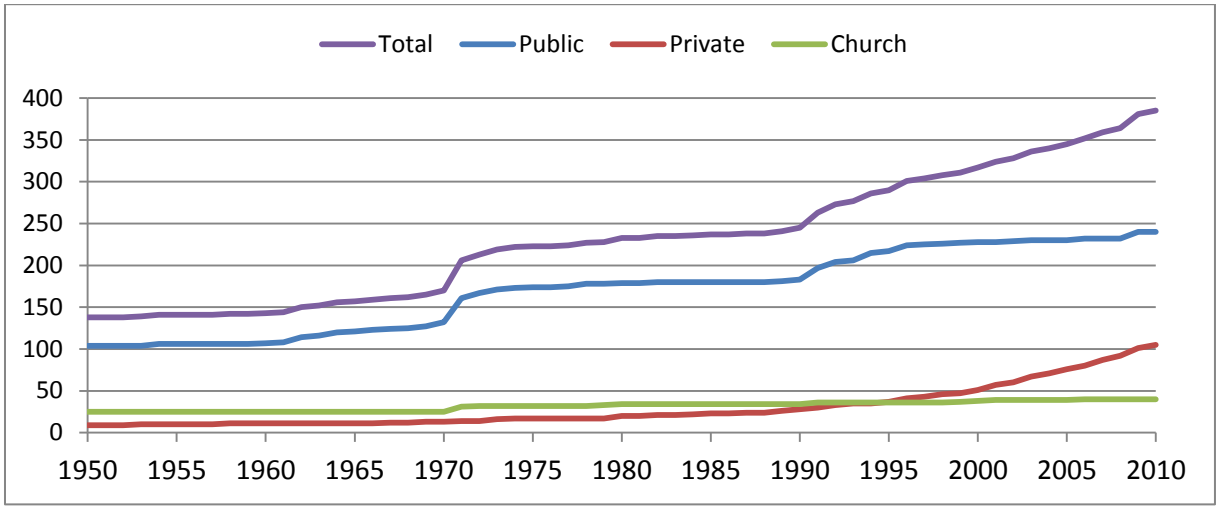
Source: Federal Statistics Office Germany website, https://www-genesis.destatis.de/genesis/online/data;jsessionid=FF8033ADAB960F4BA821C50CCAC34962.

As a result of the regionalisation policies of the 1960s, higher education became widely available throughout the country. The more or less even development of universities has been an identifying feature for the higher education system. Until recently, it was not possible to talk about vertical diversity between institutions, at least not within the same sector (Hahn & Teichler 2005: 60). Recently this principle has been broken. The governments promote more and more competition based funding for limited number of institutions fostering the vertical differentiation of the system, e.g., the Excellence Initiative.

The Availability of Private Higher Education

The majority of the higher education institutions in Germany are public. Figure 6.4 illustrates changes in the number of higher education institutions. Despite the steep increase of the last decade, the private higher education institutions are marginal in the system. Church-run higher education institutions comprise a stable, small section in the system.

Figure 6.4 The Number of Higher Education Institutions in Germany by Ownership (2000-2010)



Source: HRK website, Higher Education Statistics, http://www.hochschulkompass.de/hochschulen/statistik-hochschulen-nach/traegerschaft-und-bundesland.html

During the last decade the percentage of students in private institutes in the whole student body has increased from 1.3% (1999) to 4.9% (2010). The percentage of students in church owned higher education institutions remains around 1% (Federal Statistics Office website).

6.2.4.2. The Pre-higher Education System

In Germany, primary school is comprehensive and generally lasts four years (6-10 years of age). Pupils then continue their education in one of the secondary school tracks. The type of secondary school is decided based on pupils' grades, the opinion of their parents and teachers' recommendations. The secondary school lasts until the end of compulsory schooling (age 17-19). Secondary education has two levels: the lower level (6 years) has courses in general nature and the upper level (3 or 4 years) mostly in vocational nature (except Gymnasium). There are various types of lower secondary schools in Germany depending on the *Land*. The most common types are *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, *Gymnasium* and *Gesamtschule*. The upper secondary school types differ. They are composed of vocational schools (*Berufsfachschule*, *Fachoberschule*, *Berufliches Gymnasium/Fachgynasium*, *Berufsoberschule*) and training (i.e., *Berufschule* with the dual system) and *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* (please see Annex IV for a diagram of the education system in Germany). Each type leads to a different type of qualification. *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* leads to the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* (i.e., general higher education entrance qualification), *Berufsoberschule* leads to the *Fachgebundene Hochschulreife* and the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* in case of proficiency in a second foreign language, *Fachoberschule* leads to the *Fachhochschulreife* (i.e., the higher education entrance qualification for the *Fachhochschule*), the *Fachgebundene Hochschulreife* and the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* in case of proficiency in a second foreign language, *Berufsfachschule* leads to the *Fachhochschulreife* under certain circumstances, *Berufliches Gymnasium* or *Fachgymnasium* may lead to a combination of the *Hochschulreife* or the *Fachhochschulreife* and a vocational qualification in accordance with the *Land* law (e.g., for assistant occupations) (Eurydice 2009: 104). Upper secondary education concludes with a final examination, i.e., *Abitur*, for the general education sector and various other examinations for the vocational sector.

Schooling is compulsory in Germany, which leads to high schooling ratios for secondary education. The UNESCO provides data on the net enrolment rates at secondary schools in Germany only for 1993-1997 and the figures are around 89%. These figures appear low when it is calculated for the whole age cohort due to the stratified secondary education system of the country (i.e., there are different school leaving ages depending on the track). According to the Federal Statistical Office's data from 2000-2009, 95 to 99 % children at the age of 11-14 are enrolled at schools. After the age of 15, the percentages start to reduce. This reduction does not mean less participation in secondary education, but early graduations. It is possible to conclude that almost entire age cohort access to secondary education.

Structural conditions become more determining in highly stratified schooling systems, like in Germany. The type of lower secondary school is influential on the choice of upper secondary school which is stratified in a similar way. In such a system, a very determining decision on the future educational life of a person is made at a very early age (10) which might not always be accurate. Moreover, the decisions are criticised due to being socially biased in some cases. For instance, the children from immigrant backgrounds have a higher tendency to end up in lower tracks (*Hauptschule*) due to their poor German language skills among other reasons (Özcan 2007: 6). Mayer *et al.* (2007: 247) state the stratified education system in Germany as one of the main reasons of the high level of inequalities in access to higher education. The authors also observe a declining trend of inequalities and explain it with the steadily decreasing number of pupils in "the dead-end *Hauptschule* track" which at the same time means less social selectivity among other two types. Another explanation is the development of the vocational training system and the preference of employers for *Realschule* or *Gymnasium* graduates. To find a good apprenticeship position is a different reason than accessing to higher education (which is the main motive for entering *Gymnasium*) for children from lower socio-economic groups to enter into higher tracks of secondary education (Mayer et al. 2007: 248).

6.2.4.3. The Cost of Higher Education

In Germany, education is free at primary and secondary schools. Since 2005 the *Länder* are allowed to charge tuition fees for higher education. This decision is followed by the introduction of tuition fees in many *Länder*. By 2010, 11 *Länder* were charging fees which vary mostly according to the semester in which a student is studying. However, the introduction of tuition fees did not necessarily receive high voter appreciation, which resulted in some cases in the abolishment of the fees (please see Annex V for the changes). Even though it is early to measure the actual impact of tuition fees on participative equity, possible negative effects of tuition fees on applicants from lower economic backgrounds is criticised by many opponents, especially by students (FZS interview 2009).

6.2.5. Explaining the Social Dimension in Germany

The social dimension understanding in Germany has been researched in the biannual National Reports produced for the Bologna Process, the work of the National Team of Bologna experts, actions taken in the context of the Bologna Process reforms (KMK, BMBF, HRK, DSW), *fzs* and the interviews.

6.2.5.1. The Awareness of the Social Dimension

The 2001-2003 National Report of Germany does not mention the social dimension (cf. KMK, HRK & BMBF 2002). The template for the 2003-2005 national reports specifically asks about

the measures to promote the equality of access in relation to the social dimension. In this context, the 2003-2005 National Report mentions the legal enshrinement of equal access, the existence of overrepresented groups in higher education and the student financing system (Hendriks & Galler 2005: 11). The social dimension is defined as a future challenge and the development of Europe-wide models for mobile students and relevant data collection was recommended (Hendriks & Galler 2005: 14). In this report, the social dimension is regarded as an aspect of mobility. The template for the 2005-2007 national report specifically asks about measures for "widening access to quality higher education" and completing higher education studies. In this context, the report mentions the enshrinement of equal access, data collection on the social situation of students and student services, i.e., financial aid for students (KMK & BMBF 2006: 20). The report also mentions the social dimension as a future challenge. It states that the social dimension "covers more than just issues of student mobility" and mentions the need for observing the impact of the introduction of tuition fees on the student composition (KMK & BMBF 2006: 27). This report recognises a wider scope for the social dimension, while still relating it to mobility, and refers to the balanced composition of the student body and improving access conditions as goals. In addition to this, it refers to the role of the state in taking necessary financial measures to support students. The template for the 2007-2009 report has a special section on the social dimension asking various issues and demanding a national strategy and an action plan for the social dimension. In this section of the report there are detailed explanations on the reasons of underrepresentation and the current situation. The reasons are listed in general as financial obstacles, the lack of parents' awareness, the attractiveness of non-higher education study options and the lack of counselling and guidance (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 2-5). Concerning the measures the report lists existing initiatives and possible others; however, does not include a strategic action plan for the social dimension. This section mentions the importance of access to higher education with respect to the graduates' contribution to the society and economy. By looking at these statements, it is possible to conclude that there is an understanding of the social dimension close to the one defined at the Bologna level. The interviews with the BMBF representatives mainly affirmed the statements in the national reports and stated the social dimension as "an interesting issue", yet not a priority issue in the national Bologna Process agenda (BMBF interview 2009).

HRK's website[60] and publications[61] are analysed to find out the social dimension understanding of this actor. In none of the publications included in its website, the social dimension is an issue, likewise for the KMK. As the list of resolutions and suggestions of the HRK and the KMK in 1999-2010 show, the social dimension has not been an agenda item for these actors in the Bologna Process context. None of the resolutions or documents addresses the social dimension as the main issue.

The interview with the DSW revealed the social dimension as an important topic, while acknowledging its low status in the Bologna Process context. The DSW focuses on the importance of student services within the context of the Bologna Process. Accordingly, the change of degree structures and also non-Bologna relevant changes in higher education influence students' experiences which would require further support from the DSW.

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[60] http://www.hrk-bologna.de/bologna/de/home/3774.php, http://www.hrk-bologna.de/bologna/de/home/1916.php, http://www.hrk-bologna.de/bologna/de/home/3096.php, http://www.hrk.de/109_4749.php

[61] HRK, "Beiträge zur Hochschulpolitik" 1999-2010.

In addition to these, there is extensive data collection on social dimension issues. The DSW carries out surveys on the socio-economic situation of students, i.e., the "Social Surveys" (*Sozialerhebungen*) in three years intervals since 1951. In addition to this, the "Education in Germany" (*Bildung in Deutschland*) reports provide biannual information on education and immigration, the HIS GmbH provides surveys on access and graduation and the Federal and Länder statistical offices provide regular publications, i.e., "Higher Education Institutions at a Glance" (*Hochschulen auf einen Blick*), "Students at Higher Education Institutions" (*Studierende an Hochschulen*), "Examinations at Higher Education Institutions" (*Prüfungen an Hochschulen*) and "Non-monetary Index Statistics for Higher Education Institutions" (*Nichtmonetäre hochschulstatistische Kennzahlen*) (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 11). In addition to this, many higher education institutions carry out surveys on student experiences. Germany participates in the EUROStudent survey, too. The extensive data collection processes in Germany show a traditional policy concern on the social dimension relevant issues.

The Role of the Student Unions

In Germany, the involvement of the student unions in policy making processes at the *Länder* level depends on the *Länder* regulations. In general, student unions do not have a highly organised national structure. They have consultative functions and a relative limited role in policy making processes. In Germany, the student unions receive financial support from the state in the form of project based funding. The lack of financial support is identified as a problem for German student organisations during the interview (FZS interview 2009). The *Länder* level involvement of students in decision making processes changes depending on specific regulations. The institutional representation of students is preserved by legislation (KMK, BMBF 2006: 6). In the higher education institutions, the Student Parliament (*Studierendenparlament*) and the General Student Committee (*Allgemeiner Studierendenausschuss)* represent students (Eurydice 2009: 59). Institutional level can be considered as the most active level for student unions.

At the federal level, the *fzs* is an umbrella organisation for around a quarter of the student organisations in Germany and represents around half of the students in German higher education institutions. The members are formal (i.e., legally recognised) and informal (without legal recognition, e.g., in Bayern) student organisations from higher education institutions. The member organisations pay annual fees to *fzs* depending on the number of students they represent. The *fzs* is included in the national Bologna Follow-up Group and is a member of the ESU. The *fzs*, like many other student unions, actively works on and supports the promotion of participative equity through increasing the opportunities for disadvantaged groups, taking measures against discrimination and the improvement of financial support for students and campaigns against tuition fees. The analysis of the *fzs* policy papers[62] in 2002-2010 on the Bologna Process revealed that it has the social dimension as a priority issue. However, it is difficult to observe a strong role played by the *fzs* to promote the social dimension due to its limited action scope at the national level.

[62]http://www.fzs.de/themen/internationales/europaeische_entwicklungen/1547.html,
http://www.fzs.de/themen/internationales/europaeische_entwicklungen/1005.html,
http://www.fzs.de/themen/internationales/europaeische_entwicklungen/991.html,
http://www.fzs.de/themen/internationales/europaeische_entwicklungen/205641.html

6.2.5.2. Goal Indicators

In the 2007-2009 National Report, underrepresentation is defined based on gender, socio-economic background, immigration background, foreign qualifications[63] (i.e., students with higher education entrance qualifications obtained abroad), disability, family situation (i.e., students with children) and educational path (i.e., students with non-formal and informal qualifications).

Access

According to the OECD data[64] in 2000-2007, the percentage of first time entrants in tertiary education in the corresponding age group has been around 35% in Germany. It is possible to observe a steady increase of around 1%.

The stratified education system of Germany is explanatory for the relatively low level of net enrolment rates. As mentioned above, the stratified system offers several alternative tracks to higher education. Around two third of secondary school pupils are in vocational training (Eurydice 2009: 94). Vocational education does not primarily aim at higher education.

One of the underrepresented groups in higher education is stated as men (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 2). According to OECD data, the gender parity in higher education has been around 1.05 in Germany. Considering that a ratio of 1 is the normal representation, females are slightly overrepresented in Germany in ISCED 5A+5B.

In Germany, different from many other countries, it is possible to reach data on the socio-economic background of students. The socio-economic background is measured by the educational attainment and the occupational status of parents. There are already various studies measuring inequality in access to higher education. Mayer *et al*. (2007) observe a declining trend in access inequalities. According to the 19th Social Survey (DSW & HIS 2009: 131) around 40% of university and 25% of *Fachhochschulen* students are from higher social origins. While this situation has not changed so much during the last decade, compare to 20 years ago, the percentage of this group increased in universities from 29% in 1991 to 41% in 2009 and in *Fachhochschulen* from 13% in 1991 to 25% in 2009. In a similar way, the percentage of higher education students whose parents are higher education graduates raised from 44% in 2000 to 51% in 2009 (DSW&HIS 2009: 125). However, the data does not include figures on the existence of this group in the population, i.e., the percentage of higher education graduate parents among the corresponding age cohort. Therefore, it is not possible to make any conclusion with respect to the reflection of diversity.

People from immigrant backgrounds are considered as one of the main underrepresented groups in higher education. According to the social dimension national strategy report,

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[63] It shall be noted that this group is not considered as an underrepresented group in the context of this research. These students come to Germany with the purposes of higher education studies; they do not exist in the society independent of their educational purposes, unlike people with immigrant backgrounds. The policy makers tend to mention this group in relation to their desire for higher percentages of international students which is considered to be a competitiveness indicator. The problems in relation to this group's progression of studies can be a matter of secondary concern for the social dimension and a primary concern for the mobility action area.

[64] OECD Stat (2010) http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/tertiary-education-entry-rates_20755120-table2

while 20% of the whole population has an immigrant background, they make up only 8% of the student body (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 3).

Data are available on the percentage of disabled students based on self-evaluation. However, it is not complete and there is no data on the percentage of disabled people in the whole population. Hence, it is not possible to make a sound comparison. Nonetheless, students with disabilities are referred as an underrepresented group during the interviews and there is an increasing trend in students reporting themselves as disabled.

Completion

According to OECD data, graduation rates in tertiary type A education increased from 18,4% in 2000 to 23,4% in 2007. However, there is no available about the graduation rates of underrepresented groups.

6.2.5.3. The Social Dimension Means

The Admission Mechanism

Admission mechanisms are discussed with respect to regulations, the recognition of prior learning and national qualifications frameworks in the context of the social dimension.

In general, the holders of the required higher education entrance qualification are admitted to the programme of their choice. This is *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* (for all study fields) or *Fachgebundene Hochschulreife* (for limited study fields) for universities and *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* or *Fachhochschulreife* for *Fachhochschulen*. In cases where the number of applicants exceeds the number of available places there is a selection procedure. The allocation is done by the Central Office for the Allocation of Study Places (*Zentralstelle für die Vergabe von Studienplätzen – ZVS)* and higher education institutions (Eurydice 2009: 146). According to the Higher Education Admission Reform (2004), 1/5 of the study places are allocated to the best graduates of the upper secondary schools (*Abitur* holders), 1/5 is allocated according to the waiting list and 3/5 is allocated by the higher education institutions (BMBF 2009b). There is a plan to establish a central unit to arrange the admission to higher education. This unit will also guide applicants (Eurydice 2009: 147). In Germany, since higher education candidates are already filtered during secondary education and stratified according to their eligibility, a fierce competition in the entry phase is not observable.

In Germany, 1% of new students in universities and *Fachhochschulen* were people with employment and without formal admission qualifications in 2006-2007 (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 28). Mayer et al. considers the exam requirements (Abitur or other similar) as the bottleneck in access to tertiary education. "There is no direct access to tertiary education from the vocational training system without passing a set of exams" (2007: 246). Recently actions were taken to include people with non-formal and informal prior learning in higher education. Prior learning is recognised in access to higher education and for exemption from courses. Since 2002, prior non-formal and informal learning is recognised for the exemption from up to 50% of courses (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 29). Most of the *Länder* have included legal rules for opening the universities to people who did not acquire the regular admission to universities (*Abitur*) and have skills of advanced technicians (Die Regierungschefs der Länder 2008: 11). In 2009, the *Länder* included vocational qualifications and experience in the eligibility criteria. Accordingly, these applicants can access to higher education after completing a vocational training and three years of experience in their occupation (Eurydice 2009: 146). Yet, the need for further and more transparent procedures for recognition is

noted. There is a continuing work for improving the crediting of vocational qualifications (Greisler & Hendriks 2008).

For the development of national qualifications frameworks, the work started in 2002 and the "Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Degrees" was adopted in 2005 (KMK & BMBF 2006: 3). The national qualifications are defined based on learning outcomes. The next step is the description of programme specific qualifications (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 14).

Concerning the admission regulations recent changes targeted at the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning.

Variety of Learning Provisions

Concerning study programmes and provisions, the social dimension includes the adoption of two cycle degree structures, curriculum reform and modularisations, the use of ECTS and qualifications framework (already covered above) and provision of variable study modes, i.e., distance education, e-learning and part-time studies, etc..

As for two cycle degree structure, curricular reform and modularisation, and the use of the ECTS, many actions are taken. The initiatives for the modularisation of the study programmes already existed before the Bologna Process. The BMBF and *Länder* governments launched a pilot scheme in 1998. "In September 2000, the KMK adopted general criteria for the introduction of credit systems and modularization" (KMK, HRK & BMBF 2002: 7). By 2006, all bachelor and master courses were modularised (KMK & BMBF 2006: 14). By 2008/2009, 75% of all study programmes and 30% of the students were in the two cycle system (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 5). In 2000, Germany took action to convert the German marks into the ECTS credits. The ECTS is developed based on the student workload, but not on learning outcomes. Currently, the ECTS is used only for mobility programmes (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 26).

The main alternative learning mode is distance education in Germany. The *Fernuniversität* was established in 1974 in Hagen as a comprehensive university for distance studies. It is the only university in Germany offering only distance education. The *Fernuniversität* offers "Diplom, Bachelor and Master degrees in four subject areas" (Eurydice 2009: 172). Distance education is also provided by distance education *Fachhochschulen* and private *Fernfachhochschulen* (Eurydice 2009: 173). Ordinary universities and *Fachhochschulen* also started to offer distance education.

Since 1974, *Berufsakademien*, as non-higher education institutions, offer a dual system (i.e., a combination of courses and on the job training) as an alternative to higher education. They help to widen the course offers. The certificates gained from *Berufsakademien* are recognised as Bachelor's degrees (Eurydice 2009: 139). Similar provisions are also available in the *Fachhochschulen*, especially in engineering and business administration programmes. "Graduates are awarded a Diplomgrad, to which the word *Fachhochschule* is added, or the Bachelor's degree and, at the same time, they obtain the vocational training leaving certificate" (Eurydice 2009: 173).

The national report for the Bologna Process 2007-2009 also mentions "bridging" courses, programmes for working people and "blended learning" as flexible provisions to meet different needs. These provisions are mentioned to focus on master's level studies and as part of continuing education. (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 30).

Student Services

In Germany, the local Student Affairs' Offices (*Studentenwerke*) provide student services to higher education students in their locality. Different from other case study countries, the Student Affairs' Offices has the main responsibility for the social and economic wellbeing of students and provide almost entire student services, i.e., housing, food services and psychological assistance, and administer the government funds for students (*BAföG*). At the national level, 58 local branches come together under the DSW. The BMBF plays an important role in funding direct and indirect financial aid for higher education students. For Germany, it shall be highlighted that a high share of support for students is indirect which is allocated to students' parents in the form of child money, tax reductions and health insurance subsidies.

Guidance and Counselling

According to relevant higher education legislations, the main responsibility for counselling and guidance services lies on higher education institutions. Student counselling and guidance services include the provision of information and assistance for prospective students and educational and psychological counselling. These services are carried out by student counselling offices, lecturers and different student bodies (Eurydice 2009: 166). Student counselling offices together with employment agencies' career guidance services offer career guidance for students (Eurydice 2009: 167). For instance, the KMK and the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*) cooperate with schools to support the transition from school to vocational training, to higher education or to work (Eurydice 2009: 125). The Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process Report (CHEPS, ECOTEC & INCHER 2010a: 56) shows a high quality and wide availability of educational, psychological and career counselling and guidance services. Guidance and counselling services for disabled students are found out to be limited in the study.

Local student services offer psychological and social counselling for students to support their wellbeing and help them in crisis situations. Psychological counselling is offered by 42 of the 58 Student Affairs' Offices. 43 Student Affairs' Offices offer social counselling to advice students about the socio-economic facilities, i.e., housing allowance law, child benefits, health care, pension insurances, etc. (DSW website[65]). In addition to this, since 2003, the DSW has run four rounds of competition for ideas from students to address the needs of students. So far, the winning examples focused on students in need of psychological support, students with children, prospective students who do not have anyone in his/her family with higher education attainment and international students (DSW website[66]).

The DSW emphasises the importance of student services for supporting the students in adapting to the new degree structures. The new requirements of the courses (i.e., shortened study periods and less time for employment during studies) will challenge students which may require more counselling (DSW 2006: 3).

In Germany, increasing the participation of students from immigrant and lower socio-economic backgrounds is seen as an issue of better counselling and guidance especially at pre-higher education levels. Measures have been taken to include the provision of information on study opportunities and various student aid schemes to parents and pupils. Further information is provided to the applicants from vocational backgrounds about the

[65] http://www.studentenwerke.de/main/default.asp?id=04100

[66] http://www.studentenwerke.de/main/default.asp?id=04310

linkage between vocational and academic education. Special counselling and support services are also offered to international students to ensure better integration (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 7).

Six *Länder* introduced legislative changes for the appointment of commissioners to attend to the needs of disabled students. The "Studies and Handicaps Information and Counseling Centre" (*Informations- und Beratungsstelle Studium und Behinderung - IBS*) provides information and guidance at the national level for students with disabilities and/or chronic diseases. The IBS, with other experts, has the further function of voicing the interests of disabled students at policy making platforms. The IBS works under the DSW and is funded by the BMBF (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 8).

Students with children and pregnant students have special counselling and support offered by commissioners for equality (*Gleichstellungsbeauftragte*), as well as certain flexibilities in taking exams and maternal leaves (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 9).

Financial Support

In Germany, student loans and grants are regulated by the Federal Education and Training Assistance Act (*BAföG - Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz*). The funding is provided by the federal and *Länder* governments. The BAföG aid is allocated to students with German citizenship, with a prospect to receive permanent residence in Germany or having equal rights with German students and being under the age of 30. The amount of the aid depends on the parents' or spouse's income level and students' own socio-economic status. Students can receive higher BAföG support if they are not living with their parents. The duration of the aid depends on the study progression of the receiving student. Only half of the amount must be paid back several years after graduation. Students can apply for parental and child benefits and housing allowances along with the BAföG-based support. Furthermore, several foundations and *Länder* specific scholarship programmes distribute scholarships to higher education students on merit and need basis (KMK & BMBF 2006: 21). According to the Social Survey Results, in 2000-2009, around 90% of the "normal students[67]" receive money from their parents and around 30% from the BAföG. The same data also shows that an increasing percentage of students get study loan (i.e., 2% in 2000 and 4% in 2009). According to the same survey results, the financial support from parents constitutes almost half of the monthly student budget (please see Table 6.7). Another major category is employment during studies, which has decreased during the last decade.

Table 6.7 Composition of Monthly "Normal Student" Budget in Germany (2000-2009)

	2000	2003	2006	2009
Parents	49	51	52	48
BAföG	11	13	14	15
Own earnings	31	27	24	26
Others	9	9	10	11

Source: DSW & HIS, Prepared based on 16th-19th Social Survey Results

[67] Normal students are defined in the Social Survey as students who do not live with their parents and who are not married. This group creates the majority of the student body, i.e., 65% of students in Germany in 2009 (DSW & HIS 2009).

The 22nd Amendment of the BAföG (2008) made it easier to access to the BAföG aid for students with migration backgrounds. Entitlement to the aid depends on the applicants' possibility to stay in Germany as a long term resident. Private foundations are increasingly providing funding for young people with migration backgrounds (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 8). The 23rd Amendment of the BAföG increased the age limit from 30 to 35 at Master's degree level (BMBF website[68]).

Since 2001, the Educational Credit Programme (*Bildungskreditprogramm*) provides loans mainly to German students and pupils who are towards the end of their studies and aged 18-36. The credit is distributed independent of the BAföG aid and personal or parents' income. Students can receive 100, 200 or 300€ for up to 24 months. The loan should be paid back four years after the first instalment month and an interest rate is applied. (BVA website[69])

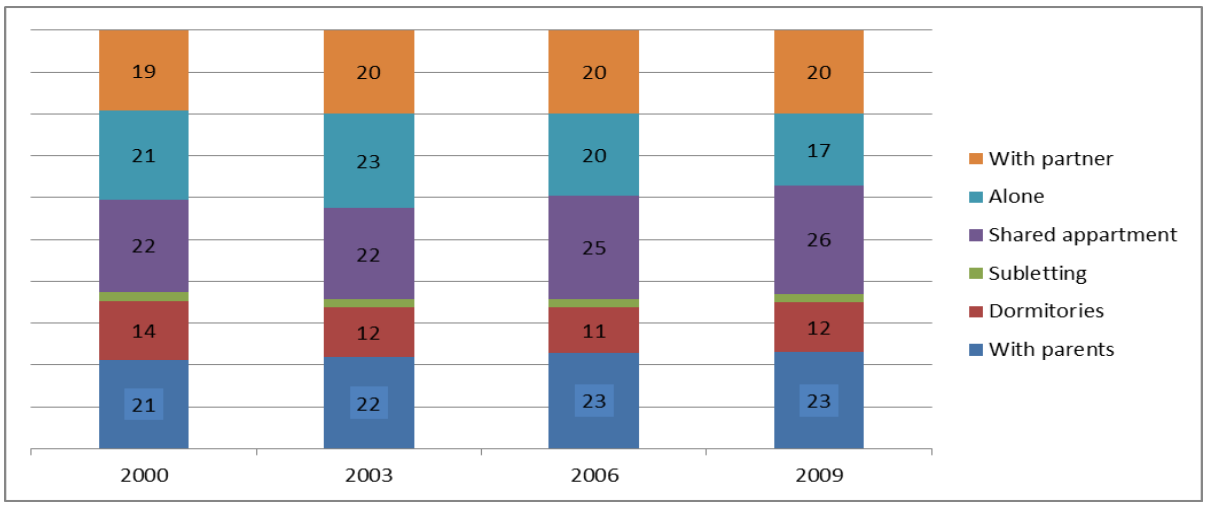
In Germany, there is a special allowance for disabled students to meet their extra costs for studying, as well as living expenses, medical costs, studying abroad and special care and assistance. The enshrinement of this allowance is considered (DSW website[70]).

Additional financial aid for students with children is also available. The BAföG aid recipients with children younger than 10 are eligible for a child support allowance of 113€ for the first and 85€ for each additional child. There are also further projects to foster higher education institutions to become more family friendly, such as the "Family at the University" (*Familie in der Hochschule*) competition since 2007. The competition will provide up to 100,000€, for two years to each of eight higher education institutions and aims at supporting students to balance their studies and family life (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 9).

General Student Services

All local Student Affairs' Offices provide relatively cheap student housing. The amount of the rent depends on the region. Figure 6.5 shows the accommodation situation of students in Germany.

Figure 6.5 The Accommodation Situation of Students in Germany in % (2000-2009)



Source: DSW & HIS 2009: 402

[68] BMBF website http://www.bmbf.de/en/892.php

[69] http://www.bva.bund.de/cln_236/DE/Aufgaben/Abt__IV/Bildungskredit/bildungskredit-node.html?__nnn=true

[70] http://www.studentenwerke.de/main/default.asp?id=06201

According to the 19th Social Survey, the accommodation situation of students has not changed remarkably during the last decade. The most common forms of student housing are living with parents, renting an apartment and dormitories. According to a HIS survey on students' accommodation, 77% (Wank et al. 2009: 13) and according to the 19th Social Survey (DSW & HIS 2009: 417), 60% of the students are very satisfied or satisfied with their current accommodation situation. 74% of the dormitories are owned by the Student Affairs' Offices, 10% by the churches and 16% by private companies and associations (Wank et al. 2009: 27). According to the HIS survey results on students' accommodation, 52 % of the students prefer dormitories due to their low rent and 49% due to their convenient location associations (Wank et al. 2009: 30).

In Germany, students are covered by their parents' health insurance until the age of 25. Afterwards, they are required to get their own health insurance with special rates for students. There is not a different institutional setting for the health care of higher education students.

The Student Affairs' Offices also provide subsidised food for students. These services are available in 200 cities with higher education institutions (around 300 higher education institutions) and offered by 58 local branches (DSW website[71]).

The local Student Committees of higher education institutions arrange free public transportation for matriculated students for a limited area. Other study environment facilities are mainly provided by higher education institutions.

Other Means

The 2007-2009 National Report states cooperation programmes between schools and higher education institutions in order to increase the percentage of female students in mathematics, computer science, natural sciences and technology through various projects, i.e. Girls' days, Come on, do MINT (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 7). These programmes are however difficult to assume as actions taken against underrepresentation in general, since the same report states men rather than women as underrepresented in higher education.

In addition to this, the importance of participation at earlier levels of education is made clear by *Länder* prime ministries and the federal government. There are initiatives to foster the language education of immigrant children and their parents at the pre-school and school levels (Die Regierungschefs der Länder 2008, Eurydice 2009: 114).

In Germany, according to the higher education acts at the federal and *Länder* level, special needs of disabled students shall be taken into consideration in exam regulations. In January 2008, a similar criterion is introduced for accreditation of higher education programmes (Greisler & Hendriks 2008: 9)

Students with children are provided with certain flexibilities. In case of pregnancy and maternity leave, students can take a leave of absence and can get an extension of time for the completion of their examinations. There is a variety of institutions - i.e., higher education institutions, students' associations, authorities for youth affairs, student government organisations and commissioners for equality - offering guidance and support for students with children. For instance, students' associations offer day-care facilities and university service offices offer support for university staff, guest scientists and academics (Greisler & Hendriks 2008). Furthermore, since 2002, there is an audit of "Family-friendly University"

[71] http://www.studentenwerke.de/main/default.asp?id=08100

that reviews measures of support for people to balance work and family life in the institutions. A number of higher education institutions have earned the audit seal. The Federal Government's report on families follows the situation of students with children with regular reports (Greisler & Hendriks 2008). Local Student Services also offer services for students with children. 54 Student Affairs' Offices provide 205 childcare centres. The childcare centres are aligned to the needs of students in terms of location, prices and opening hours (DSW website[72]).

Germany also developed programmes for lifelong learning which aimed at supporting the transition to higher education, e.g., the "Lifelong Learning for All Strategy (*Strategie für Lebenslanges Lernen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) agreed by the *Bund-Länder* Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion on 05 July 2004" and the "BMBF's Learning Regions – Providing Support for Networks programme (*Lernende Regionen – Förderung von Netzwerken*)" (KMK & BMBF 2006: 17).

6.2.6. Conclusion

In Germany, ensuring the equality of opportunity in access to higher education has traditionally been a policy concern. The policies targeting at even regional development, increasing the system capacity can be seen as its indicators. In addition to this, the extensive data gathering on the access inequalities illustrate such a concern. The social dimension, despite being related to mobility in the beginning, is perceived in relation to increasing access, especially of underrepresented groups, and supporting completion of studies with a special emphasis on the financial aid for students. The underrepresented groups are defined in detail together with possible reasons and explanations of their obstacles. In this sense, it is possible to observe awareness on the social dimension issues in Germany. However, this awareness has so far not made the social dimension a primary action area in the Bologna Process context. While the BMBF has mentioned it, the KMK and the HRK does not mention it at all. Although students have their traditional concerns for it, they do not actively take part in policy making process at the federal level.

The stratified structure of the secondary education and the abundance of alternative tracks to higher education can be concluded as important reasons of relatively low level of participation in higher education in Germany. The variety of provisions in tertiary education apart from higher education and the collection of such information at the *Länder* level make it difficult to find consistent data on completion of higher education studies.

Many structural reforms, e.g., the recognition of prior learning, qualifications frameworks, the change of degree structures, modularisation and the ECTS are implemented in the Bologna Process context. Yet, as mentioned before these are not the primary means for the social dimension. Various provisions of higher education studies have already existed in Germany and have not changed significantly during the last decade. Student services are well-organised in Germany. There has not been any major change in this respect. The only change has been on the eligibility requirements of the BAföG which made it more accessible for students from immigrant backgrounds. During the last decade, several schemes are introduced to increase participation of people from immigrant backgrounds in higher education. There are also several support mechanisms for students with children. The most relevant reforms for the social dimension target at adult learners and people coming from

[72] http://www.studentenwerke.de/main/default.asp?id=04100

non-traditional educational paths. It is not possible to observe a policy or agenda change directly due to the social dimension of the Bologna Process.

6.3. Turkey

6.3.1. The Higher Education System

Turkey has a unitary higher education system[73] composed of universities, high technology institutes, higher vocational schools and higher police and military schools and academies. Higher police and military schools and academies are subject to other laws and governed differently than the rest of the system. This research focuses on the first three types. Higher education institutions are either state or foundation (non-profit, private) universities. Both state and foundation universities are governed by the same higher education law. State higher education institutions have very limited autonomy in their financial and administrative affairs and have academic freedom according to the Higher Education Law.

The Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu - YÖK*) is established in 1981 by the Constitution and the Higher Education Law 2547 and is the only responsible organisation for higher education institutions. According to Constitution Article 131, the YÖK is an autonomous public corporate body that is responsible for the coordination, cooperation and supervision of higher education institutions' teaching and research activities, the appointment and dismissal of academic staff, the selection and size of student intake and funding. It also proposes the establishment of new universities, faculties or departments to the Ministry of National Education.

The main financial source of state universities is the state budget (ca. 60%). The foundation universities are mainly financed through tuition fees. In addition to this, they can ask for financial support from the state up to 45% of their expenditures and have state subsidies and financial benefits that state universities have.

In Turkey's late nation state building process, universities were expected to contribute to the legitimisation of new structures and the modernisation of the country. This expectation was even deepened with the impact of a series of military coups and interventions in 1960, 1971 and 1980. In this sense, higher education in Turkey is an example of the centralised governing tradition. Universities are considered as service providers to society and hence strictly controlled by central authorities with respect to their administrative and financial functioning. As can also be seen in the introduction of the Bologna Process reforms, often a pyramid model of decision making is followed.

6.3.2. Involvement in the Bologna Process

Since the beginning of the 20th century, modernisation has been a defining concept for the change of social and political structures in Turkey. The idea of modernisation inspired by the Western world can be considered as one of the continuities between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. According to this understanding, it is very important to adapt Western principles and values in social, political, economic and technologic areas for the development of the country and "to reach the level of civilisation" (Aydın & Keyman 2004:

[73] This section of the chapter is mostly based on the Turkey case study report of the researcher. The report is published in the Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process report. http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/bologna_process/independent_assessment_2_cases_appendices.pdf

3). Becoming an EU member state has been the longest lasting endeavour of Turkey in line with this modernisation idea. The unsteady progression of the membership negotiations fostered a will to strengthen the integration in all possible spheres. It is possible to consider the participation in the Bologna Process as "complementary to Turkey's prevailing foreign policy" (Yagci 2010: 589). In line with the EU candidacy, becoming a Bologna signatory country was supported "not to miss the train" as it is often called in Turkey; meaning, not to risk to be left out of the club. Furthermore, the existing need for reform in the higher education system and the trust in the suggested reforms of the Bologna Process to improve the higher education system has been motivating for the participation in the process. Being a signatory country of the Bologna Process is also considered important in improving the international reputation of Turkish universities and making them more competitive at the international market (Yagci 2010: 589).

Turkey became a signatory country of the Bologna Process, in 2001 in the Prague ministerial meeting. Reforms in relation to the Bologna Process are introduced, with accompanying legislative changes, to universities by the YÖK. The relevant groups taking part in the development of such policies are generally the units supervised by the YÖK, specifically the European Union and International Relations Unit. This unit was formed to coordinate the Bologna Process' related implementations in the universities (YÖK2 interview 2009). Stakeholders are consulted in some of the cases. In the transmission of reforms from legislation to implementation, the National Bologna Experts Team has a key role. The team was formed in 2004. Since then, the expert team has worked on the introduction of the main rationales and policy objectives of the Bologna Process, as well as explaining the legislative changes to higher education institutions through series of presentations and workshops at the institutional, regional and national levels. Despite the huge effort put in, as it has been identified during the interviews (YÖK1 interview 2009), the efforts seem to be too didactic and thus not fostering the internalisation of the reforms. In order to address this problem, the YÖK established the Bologna Coordination Commission (*Bologna Eşgüdüm Komisyonu - BEK*) in 2008. Accordingly, each higher education institution shall set up a commission headed by the university rector and including representatives of relevant units to coordinate and assess the implementation of the Bologna reforms at the institutional level. These commissions aim at the expansion of Bologna experts in order to improve the implementation process, increase awareness on the Bologna Process and ease coordination and monitoring. These commissions are also required to prepare annual Bologna evaluation reports (BEK reports), as well as institutional objectives concerning Bologna action lines. By this way, the YÖK is expecting to develop a self-assessment mechanism which would increase motivation and interactivity in the implementation process.

In Turkey, the main effort has been put on the implementation of structural reforms, specifically on the development of a quality assurance system. In addition to this, mobility has been considered as an important indicator of internationalisation and hence received attention. The relevant means (e.g., the ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, quality assurance system, qualifications framework etc.) to enhance these two action areas have had priority. Please see Yagci 2010 for an overview of the Bologna Process reforms in Turkey.

6.3.3. Access Policies

Traditionally, governments have produced policies to absorb the high demand for higher education in Turkey. Unlike other case study countries, it is not possible to observe a post-war expansion and democratisation wave in higher education in Turkey. Until 1955 there

were only three universities in the whole country. In the end of the 1950s, four technical universities were established to enhance the technologic and economic development of the country. In the 1950s-1970s, new universities were established in 11 big cities other than Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir (Please see Figure 6.6 for the change of number of universities). The idea was to extend higher education beyond the three metropolitan cities. It can be seen as a mild regionalisation reform. However, even today, universities are mostly concentrated in the three biggest cities, Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir.

The supply-driven higher education policies aim at increasing the system capacity without a concern for underrepresented groups. The current government provided a major example of this policy. In 2006-2011, 78 new universities (more than half of the current universities) were established. The government reasoned the expansion with the need for (The T.R. Prime Ministry website[74])

- meeting the high demand for higher education due to population growth, increasing schooling ratios and economic developments,
- increasing the number of highly qualified labour force for knowledge economies and economic growth, and enhancing international competitiveness,
- increasing the enrolment rates to reach the world averages,
- reducing the brain drain of students who cannot be allocated due to scarcity of study place and the risk of low quality higher education from abroad (i.e., students who cannot find a study place in Turkey might prefer to take low quality education),
- contribution of universities in social, cultural, technical and economic development of their localities in terms of knowledge, education, human resources, work and social services,
- financial inflow coming from international students and reducing the outflow of national resources to get higher education.

According to this expansion idea, establishment of foundation universities are supported to reduce the demand on state universities, overcome the scarcity of public funding and increase the low share of foundation universities in the higher education system compared to some other countries. In the meanwhile, the student intake of existing universities has also been increased (please see Figure 6.7).

Another measure taken in the 1990s was to declare Northern Cyprus as the "Education Island" to absorb the excess demand. The universities that were established in the island with the encouragement of private and public investment "enrol mainly Turkish students from Turkey (i.e., ninety per cent of total enrolment is from Turkey)" (Mizikaci 2008: 529).

The main driver of the expansion in Turkey has been social demand, economic changes and the role of higher education for the national economy, as can be seen in the above mentioned list. In addition to this, "the purposes of enhancing provincial status and fulfilling pre-election promises" are unwritten and well-known drivers of the expansion (Mizikaci 2006: 23). The new universities, on the one hand, are welcomed for increasing access opportunities to higher education and supporting the social and economic development of their localities. On the other hand, they raise valid concerns on the quality of education. The higher education system experienced a sudden expansion in 1992, too, when the government opened 23 universities at once. The rapid expansion of the system brought concerns on the quality of education. Initially, as argued by Dündar and Lewis (1999: 361), the new

[74] www.basbakanlik.gov.tr

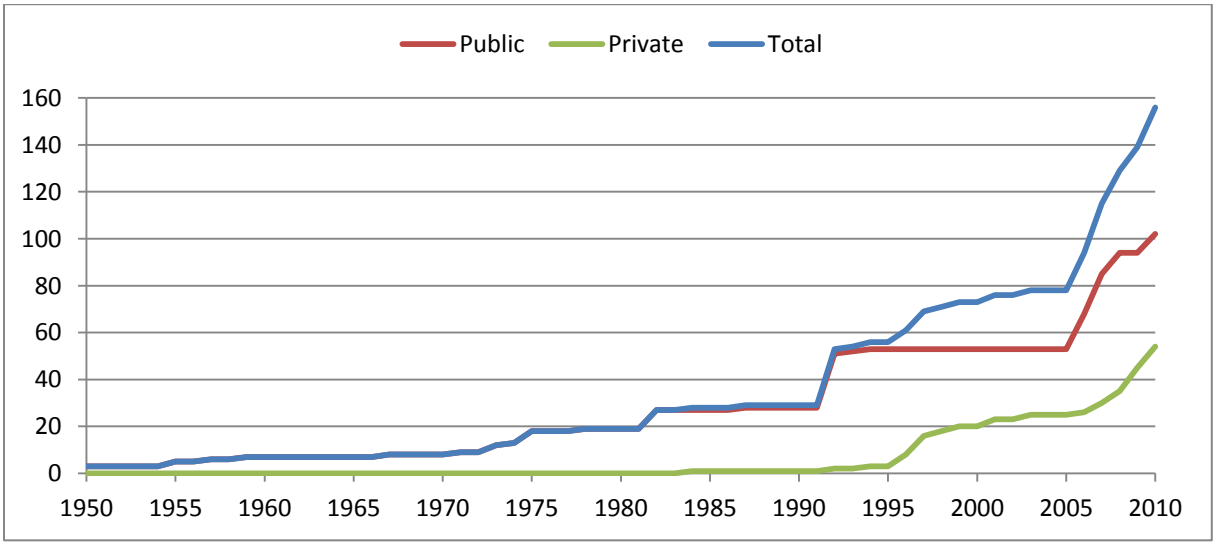
universities remained small in the range of programmes and student numbers and mostly lacked academic staff and physical environment. In a similar way, the new universities of the recent expansion are suffering from the lack of academic staff, convenient study environment and various other services. The equality of opportunities is considered especially problematic for the students of the new universities who are educated by high school teachers rather than university level academics (BP3 interview 2009). Based on the 1992 experience, it is possible to conclude that life chances of the graduates from these new universities will be lower since they will not have opportunities to develop themselves and their lower quality higher education will not be preferred in the labour market (Mizikaci 2006: 25, Dündar & Lewis 1999). Opening new universities is also criticised for being a mere statistical endeavour (i.e., raising the enrolment rates of Turkey in international statistics or delaying high unemployment rates) (BP1 interview 2009).

6.3.4. Access Factors

6.3.4.1. The Size and Structure of the Higher Education System

In Turkey, most of the higher education institutions are universities. As meeting the demand for higher education has been the main policy driver, the size of the system has enlarged continuously, with sharp increases in 1992 and 2006-2010 (please see Figure 6.6). The recent enlargement wave still continues with the aim of ensuring a study place for each applicant.

Figure 6.6 Number of Higher Education Institutions in Turkey (1950-2010)



Source: Based on YÖK website, www.yok.gov.tr

With the expansion of the last decade, all 81 provinces in Turkey have at least one university. While the oldest universities are located in the 3 metropolitan cities (Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir), the newest universities are mostly in eastern Turkey. Higher education institutions became available all over the country.

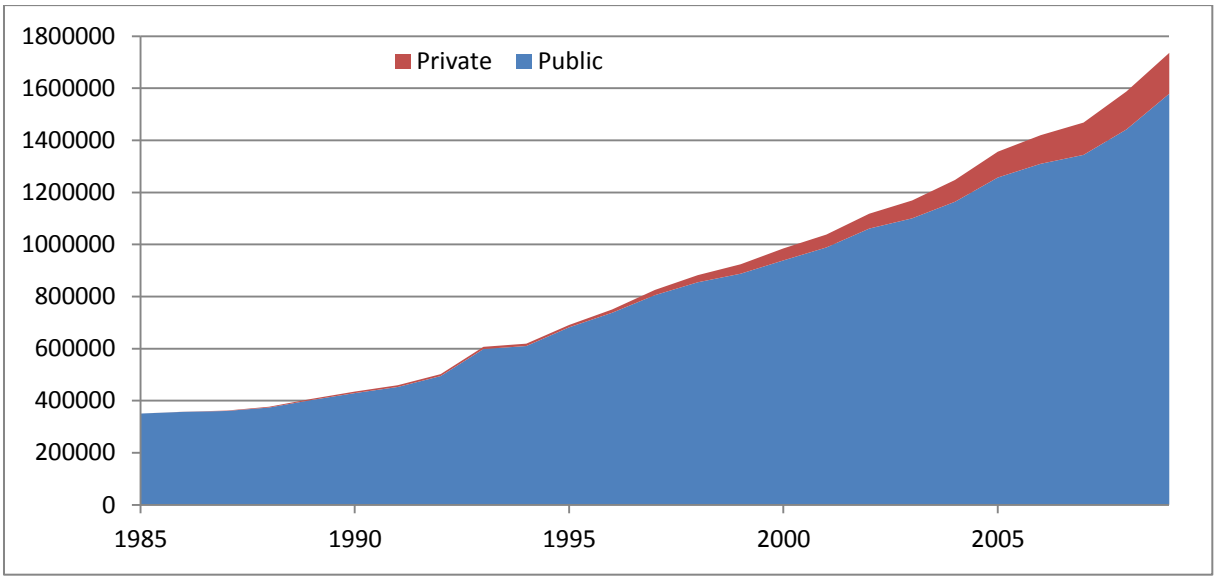
The system has a unitary structure; professionally oriented higher education programmes are included in the university sector. In this sense, horizontal diversification is very low in Turkey. Instead, there is a high extent of vertical diversity. The clearest illustrator of this diversity is the results of the university entrance exam. The candidates make their preferences of universities with stock market logic. Applicants list their preferences according to their cumulative grades by taking the previous year's admission points of universities as reference points. The universities demanded by the students with the highest

grades are the top universities in this ranking. Even though, there is not any national study on student preferences, it is possible to assume that the location and reputation of the university and perceived employment possibilities of the graduates are important factors influencing the choice of students. Traditionally, older universities are higher in the preference ranking.

The Availability of Private Higher Education

The first foundation university is established in 1984 in Turkey. Since then, their number increased steadily; yet, their share of students remained rather small (please see Figure 6.7). Private universities are advocated as means to expand the system. According to Mizikaci (2006: 27) the foundation universities create an alternative for richer applicants who otherwise would go abroad. However, most of the foundation universities cannot fill their student quotas. There are two main reasons for this: high tuition fees which are not affordable for large parts of the society in Turkey and the low labour market demand of their graduates (ibid.). The majority of the students of foundation universities have lower grades in the entrance exam. Furthermore, there are concerns about the quality of the education in private higher education institutions. According to Dündar and Lewis (1999: 351), in Turkey, the higher the expenditure per student the lower the perceived quality of the university.

Figure 6.7 Number of Students by Type of University in Turkey (1985-2009)



Source: Based on ÖSYM Statistics, www.osym.gov.tr

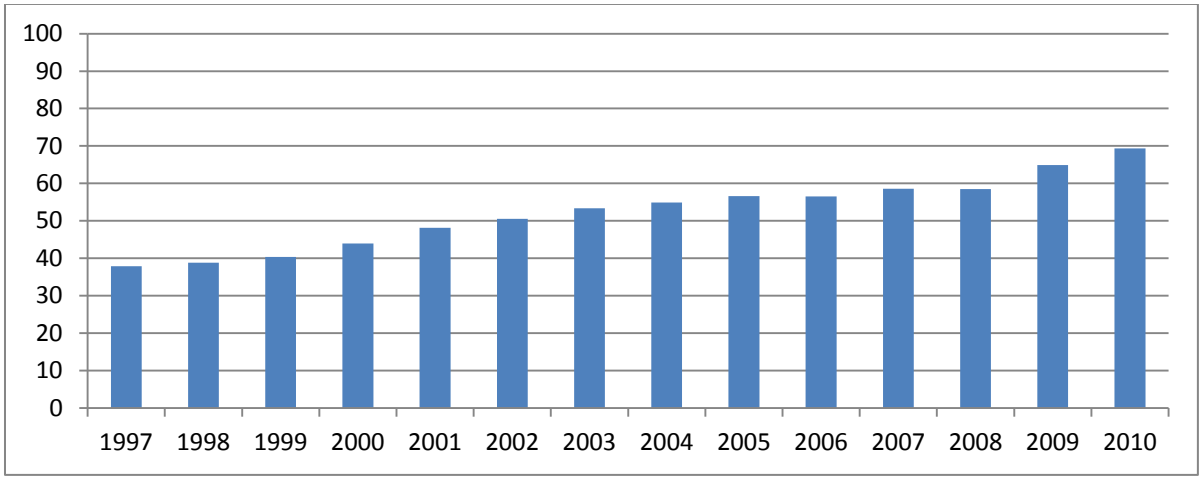
6.3.4.2. The Pre-higher Education System

Secondary education starts at the end of eight years of compulsory and comprehensive primary education and continues for four years. The typical age cohort is 14-17 years of age. There are two major high school sectors: general and vocational. The general education sector is composed of 17 and the vocational sector of 11 different types depending on the field of specialisation. Pupils are allocated to one of these types based on their primary school grades and grades from centrally administered examinations. The schools occupied with pupils with higher grades have a higher quality level and are highly demanded. Even though the schooling system is not strictly stratified, there is a clear hierarchy between different types of schools.

In Turkey, formal qualifications are the only means of access to higher education and this makes secondary school attainment an essential determinant. In 1996, compulsory education

was raised to eight years. Before this change, net schooling ratios[75], corresponding to net entry rates, were around 50%. Figure 6.8 shows the development since then. Despite the increasing trend, Turkey has rather low schooling ratios for compulsory secondary education.

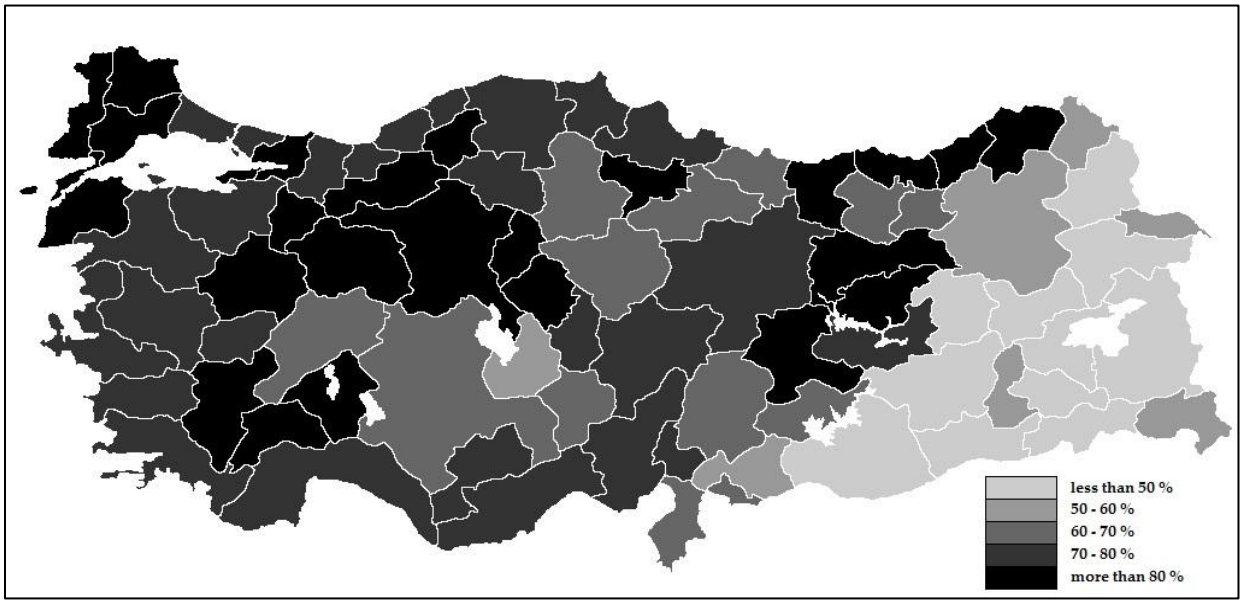
Figure 6.8 Net Schooling Ratios in Turkey. Secondary Education (1997-2010)



Source: Based on National Education Statistics, http://tuik.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do?tb_id=14&ust_id=5

Another issue about secondary education attainment relates to regional differences. In Turkey, schooling ratios differ considerably between west and east Turkey (please see Figure 6.9). This means lower participation rate in higher education from eastern Turkey.

Figure 6.9 Secondary School Schooling Ratios in Turkey by Regions (2010)



Source: Own work based on National Education Statistics, http://tuikapp.tuik.gov.tr/Bolgesel/sorguSayfa.do

In addition to this, the quality of education across regions shows big differences. Areas with lower schooling ratios are also known to have lower educational capacities. "Inadequacies in physical and human resources produce significant differences in the achievement of children

[75] Net schooling ratio is defined as the ratio between the number of pupils and the size of population of the theoretical age cohort for the relevant level of education (www.tuik.gov.tr).

for further educational attainment. Low school quality, inexperienced teachers, lack of educational technology opportunities in poor areas have direct implications in the level of access to secondary and higher education" (Mizikaci 2008: 533). In these regions another problem is the language of education. Although there are no research results available on the issue, it is a known fact and a matter in current political debates that in the regions, e.g., east and southeast Turkey, where the mother tongue is not Turkish children have difficulties to learn in Turkish at school which lowers their educational attainment.

The secondary school education although being widely available throughout the country shows differences of quality and sufficiency, which creates inequalities in the preparation for higher education. The schooling ratios decreasing to less than 50% in east and southeast Turkey brings along further inequalities in access and progress opportunities.

6.3.4.3. The Cost of Education

In Turkey, students are required to pay tuition fees, named as "contribution fees", every semester. The amount of the fee is decided according to the programme and the duration of the study and cannot exceed 25% of the total costs per student. The YÖK decides on the amount every year. In 2010, tuition fees were 71-593 TL (~35-300€) per semester. The student contribution to the total cost varies by study field between ca. 4-15% (lowest in medicine and higher in social sciences and humanities). This pattern has not changed in the last decade. Foundation university students are expected to pay full tuition fees. The foundation universities are encouraged to provide free education to at least 15% of their students in order to enjoy state subsidies. Applicants are required to pay a small administration fee (around 14€) to take the university entrance exam. Other administrative fees change depending on the university and are rather minor.

6.3.5. Explaining the Social Dimension in Turkey

The social dimension understanding in Turkey is researched in the biannual national reports produced for the Bologna Process, the work of the National Team of Bologna Experts, YÖK actions taken in the context of the Bologna Process reforms and the interviews.

6.3.5.1. The Awareness of the Social Dimension

The Bologna Process' reforms took place mostly in the form of a series of legislative reforms initiated by the YÖK. There have also been many meetings and workshops to inform the higher rank administrative staff of the universities and they are expected to disseminate the information in a top-down manner again. On the one hand, this approach is appreciated for providing at least a common structure to work on for all universities and giving enough space to universities to define their own priorities and specific conditions in theory. On the hand, it is criticised for risking the reforms to stay superficial and not to be internalised (BP3 interview 2009, YÖK2 interview 2009). In any case, it resulted in the filtering of Bologna Process issues. The issues that are not introduced by the YÖK through structural reforms mostly remained unknown to the universities, such as the social dimension.

Another indicator of the awareness on the social dimension in Turkey is the work of the National Team of Bologna Experts. For the 2003-2005 period, their work focused on the quality assurance and accreditation, two cycle system and recognition issues (Ertepinar 2005: 2). Similarly, in the following terms the Bologna Experts focused on the structural issues, i.e., quality assurance system and recognition tools (the ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, national qualifications frameworks, etc.). In evaluating the issues paid attention by the National Team

of Bologna Experts, one of the team members stated that it also depends on the composition of the team members. "If there is a team member interested in the topic, then there can be presentations on the social dimension, as it happened in 2006-2007, when not, like now [meaning 2008-2009], it becomes a low agenda item" (BP3 interview 2009).

All national reports for the Bologna Process (2001-2009) include the social dimension as an issue. Unlike the other case study countries, the social dimension is mentioned already in the 2001-2003 National Report in relation to student involvement in higher education governance (Council of Higher Education 2003: 9). The template for the 2003-2005 National Report specifically asks about the measures to promote the equality of access in relation to the social dimension. Thus, the answer relates to access only. The section explains the admission system in Turkey (Ertepinar 2005:12). The template for the 2005-2007 National Report specifically asks about measures for "widening access to quality higher education" and completing higher education studies. In this sense, the report mentions existing student services (e.g., accommodation, health, counselling and sports facilities) and participation in the EUROStudent survey for data collection (Ertepinar 2006: 18-19). The report also defines ensuring equal opportunity in access to higher education as one of the future challenges for the system (Ertepinar 2006: 20). The template for the 2007-2009 National Report has a special section on the social dimension asking various issues and demanding a national strategy and an action plan for the social dimension. This report, too, defines ensuring equal access opportunities as one of the future challenges (Demir 2008: 48). As for underrepresented groups, the report states that "there is no specific underrepresented group" in Turkey (Demir 2008: 50). This statement is explained with the existence of a strict merit system in admission to higher education through the central university entrance exam (please see 6.3.5.3 for a detailed explanation) and the absence of any discrimination policy (YÖK1 interview 2009). Yet, the report mentions the graduates of vocational secondary education[76] as a disadvantaged group due to an access bottleneck. Since there is considered to be no underrepresented group, there is no strategy or action plan annexed to the report. Yet, the need for legislative change to remove the access obstacle of vocational secondary school graduates is mentioned (Demir 2008: 54). This approach is affirmed during the interviews with the YÖK representatives (YÖK1 interview and YÖK2 interview 2009). By looking at these statements, it is not possible to observe a social dimension understanding in Turkey close to the definition concluded in the previous chapter, except mentioning the goal of ensuring equal access for all.

In Turkey, there is no systematic follow-up of the social dimension relevant issues. The main reasons are the lack of awareness and the low level of development in data collection in general. The only monitoring has been the participation in the EUROStudent survey. The

[76] The access of the vocational secondary school graduates to higher education has traditionally been a material for domestic political discussions. According to the law, if vocational secondary school graduates choose to continue to higher education studies in their specialisation field, they can either go straight to a two year programme or a four year programme with an advantage on their secondary school graduation grades. Yet, if they choose another field, they do not have this advantage. While, religious conservative governments have found this tracking idea unfair, left-liberal governments have insisted on keeping it. Its value for domestic politics boils down to the situation of the graduates of religious vocational high schools: whether they can choose to study for a qualification in something else than religion teacher or *imam*. The current government changed the legislation to dissolve any point advantage due to tracking in 2011. All secondary school graduates keep their graduation grades without any correction.

development of BEK questionnaires is also an important initiative; yet, so far without any outcome[77].

During the interviews with the experts and the YÖK representatives, it was several times clearly stated that the implementation of the structural Bologna Process reforms has been the priority of action in Turkey. One of the Bologna Experts stated that "considering that the social dimension has not been a priority area at the European level either, it is mostly unknown at the national level" (BP1 interview 2009). In this sense, none of the actors stated any action taken in relation to the social dimension. This point is also illustrated in the so Independent Assessment Report of the Bologna Process (CHEPS, ECOTEC& INCHER 2010b). Yet, it is not totally ignored. For instance, the social dimension (e.g., student services) is included as a topic in the universities' annual self evaluation reports (BEK reports) (YÖK1 interview 2009) and participation in the EUROStudent survey is considered as an important action (BP1, BP2, YÖK1 interviews 2009).

The Role of Student Councils

Considering the fact that the ESU has been the key policy entrepreneur for the social dimension at the European level, it is necessary to look at the understandings of student unions for a complete picture on the social dimension awareness.

In Turkey, after the 1980 military coup, student unions and all other representative organisations of students were banned. In 2005, student councils are established by the YÖK as a Bologna reform. The YÖK enacted the "Regulation on Student Councils of Higher Education Institutions and the National Student Council of Higher Education Institutions in Turkey". The regulation establishes student councils at the institutional and the national level. Student representatives are elected in a pyramid model (a representative for each study year is elected by students, they elect a representative for the department, the department representatives elect a representative among themselves for the faculty and the faculty representatives elect a representative among themselves for the university). The president of the student council participates in the administrative and academic boards meetings of the university and the YÖK on the issues related to students and only upon invitation (Council of Higher Education 2005b). By regulation, students are also included in internal quality assessment mechanisms.

As "the name 'National Student Council Presidency of the YÖK of the Republic of Turkey' (National Student Council's website 2010) suggests the student council considers itself as a sub-unit of the YÖK rather than as a separate body to represent and defend students' interests in higher education policy making processes" (Yagci 2010: 597). This observation is confirmed by a student council representative (BP4 interview 2009). The activities of the student councils so far have been limited to organising picnics and excursions. Beyond that, the council members are criticised for using their representative position to increase their personal political careers and for being too much politics-oriented rather than policy-oriented (personal conversation with a former ESU chairperson 2010, BP1, BP2 interview 2009).

As a very young group that may change every year as a result of the pyramid model election system, student councils are struggling to create their institutional culture and understand the processes of being involved in higher education decision making. The inclusion of students in policy making processes is a new practice in Turkey. At the moment students are

[77] By 2011 the BEK reports were still not made publicly available.

not actively participating in the policy making and implementation processes. There are problems in the process due to the lack of interest and awareness of students and, at the same time, the lack of recognition of students' voices by the "older" board members (YÖK1 interview 2009). More effort is needed both from students' and administrative units to improve the communication in between.

According to the YÖK2 interviewee (2009) the biggest Bologna impact in relation to the social dimension is the establishment of student councils in 2005 and the inclusion of students in the Bologna Promoters' Team. It is possible to conclude that the Bologna Process has been the promoter of student involvement in policy making processes rather than the student councils being promoters of the social dimension or relevant issues at the national level.

6.3.5.2. Goal Indicators

As mentioned before, the existence of underrepresented groups are rejected in official documents in Turkey based on the existence of formal equality. In this sense, commonly defined underrepresented groups are discussed.

Access

According to the OECD data[78] in 2000-2007, the percentage of first time entrants in tertiary education in the corresponding age group has increased from 21 to 29% in Turkey. There has been a steep increase in the entry rates (ISCED 5A+5B) in higher education during the last decade. This can be explained with the dramatic increase in the number of universities in addition to the continuous expansion of the student intake of the existing universities. According to the same data, females are underrepresented in higher education. The ratio is less than 0.9 meaning an overrepresentation of males in higher education.

It is not possible to find national statistics on the underrepresentation in higher education. In this sense, it is not possible to illustrate whether people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, ethnic and linguistic minorities or distant locations are underrepresented. The regional discrepancies in secondary schooling ratios suggest that people from eastern and south-eastern Turkey would be underrepresented in higher education. Despite not having any statistical information, during the last five years there has been a raising concern on the participation of people with disabilities in higher education. Unlike other case study countries, students with children and people from immigrant backgrounds do not create a big share in the society in Turkey.

Completion

According to OECD data, graduation rates have increased from 8% in 2000 to 15.2 % in 2006 for tertiary type A. However, the overall figures on the completion of studies would not be credible due to the vast expansion of the system. In addition to this, there is no information on the graduation rates of underrepresented groups.

6.3.5.3. The Social Dimension Means

The Admission Mechanism

Admission mechanisms are discussed with respect to regulations, the recognition of prior learning and national qualifications frameworks in the context of the social dimension.

[78] OECD Stat (2010) http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/tertiary-education-entry-rates_20755120-table2

The Centre for Student Selection and Placement (*Öğrenci Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi – ÖSYM*)[79] is responsible for admissions to the universities. The ÖSYM places applicants with the help of a central university entrance exam and there is no further institutional examination. The admission mechanism in Turkey is strictly merit-based. University applicants are admitted according to their cumulative scores which are an aggregation of their scores in the national university entrance exam and their secondary school graduation grades. All secondary education graduates are eligible to sit in the exam unlimited times. The exam is held annually and composed of multiple choice questions. The main rationale of the entrance exam is selecting a limited number of applicants and placing them, rather than evaluating the convenience of the applicant for the applied study programme. Applicants prepare a list of their preferred programmes after learning their scores. The ÖSYM places applicants according to their scores, preferences, available study places and rank scores of the universities. While computerised evaluation and placement of the applicants was providing trust on the system in general, recently each ÖSYM exam is followed by a cheating scandal (i.e., provision of answers to certain groups) or miscalculation of scores which highly reduced the trustworthiness of it.

Table 6.8 The Allocation of Applicants in Turkey (2000-2010)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Placed	31,2	32,4	36,4	34,8	33,3	37,3	40,2	39,1	57,8	59,9	55,1
Not placed	68,8	67,6	63,6	65,2	66,7	62,7	59,8	60,9	42,2	40,1	44,9

Source: ÖSYM Statistics, www.osym.gov.tr

The number of study places and student intake is determined by the YÖK. As can be seen in Table 6.8, until 2004, only one third of the demand was met and nowadays more than half of it. This change is related to the recent expansion of higher education in Turkey.

Since 2001, vocational high school graduates can have a straightforward transition to an associate degree programme (two years) of their relevant field without taking the exam. This change has been done in order to promote vocational education (Mizikaci 2008: 528) and to absorb the demand for higher education (YÖK1 interview 2009). The "Second University" programme of the Anadolu University offers flexibility to the first cycle graduates since 2001. They can be admitted to Open University programmes without taking the university entrance exam (Ertepinar 2006: 16).

As discussed in the previous chapter (section 5.2.2.3), in cases of high demand, the increasing importance of credentials tend to replace the education goals since the mechanism works rather exclusively. The central student selection mechanism is presented to have an advantage in ensuring equality in access since every student is entitled to take the exam regardless of their ethnic, social and economic background. However, the "examination system is strictly controlled and selective. The preparation for this examination requires hard work and the support of external costly courses" and good quality primary and secondary education (Mizikaci 2008: 534). The low match between school curriculum and the entrance

[79] A recent change in the university law renamed the organisation as "Student Selection, Evaluation and Placement Centre" and recognised it as related to the YÖK but as an autonomous institute.

exam content led to the development of private tutoring[80] (i.e., one-to-one courses or courses in profit oriented school-like training institutes - *Dersane*) for the exam preparation. The vast amounts of money required to go through the process is not affordable for poorer families. According to survey results from 2002, pupils with parents with higher education degree and employment receive more private tutoring than other pupils. Similarly, 31% of the pupils from the lowest income level (less than 250 TL ~ 125€) and 76% of the pupils from the highest income level (more than 2000TL ~ 1000€) receive private tutoring. The survey also found a positive relationship between school graduation grades and private tutoring (Tansel & Bircan 2004: 3). The research also concluded that private tutoring is the second most influential factor in getting in higher education, the first one being secondary school grades (Tansel & Bircan 2004: 7). Increasing the size of the higher education system is expected to decrease the competition and need for such alternatives (YÖK1 interview 2009). This claim, of course, can only be true if each university is demanded in the same way, which is not the case. To require the same exam for all students with different backgrounds is indeed reproducing the existing inequalities. People with the social and financial resources continue to compose the main student body. Educational and psychological damages caused by the entrance exam are further problems.

Prior non-formal and informal learning is not recognised in access to higher education or for exemption of courses. According to relevant legislation, the recognition of such prior learning is not possible. All applicants have to have formal education qualifications. There has not been any change in this respect during the last decade.

As for the development of the national qualifications framework, the Commission for the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Yeterlikler Komisyonu*) was established in May 2006 on the basis of the Dublin Descriptors. The commission prepared a draft for the national qualifications in line with European Qualifications Framework based on the levels of knowledge and understanding, applied knowledge and competences that shall be gained in the end of each cycle. The commission made a plan and pilot work for the implementation of the qualifications framework (Demir 2008). The qualifications framework is a priority issue on the national Bologna agenda and the work on it continues. In January 2010, the YÖK updated the National Qualifications Framework by adding the associate level descriptors (5th level) and changing the name in the Turkish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. However, this work is carried out to increase transparency and comparability with a learning outcomes perspective, rather than increasing the permeability of the system.

Variety of Learning Provisions

Concerning study programmes and provisions, the social dimension includes the adoption of two cycle degree structures, curriculum reform and modularisations, the use of ECTS and qualifications framework (already covered above) and provision of variable study modes, i.e., distance education, e-learning and part-time studies, etc..

Concerning the variety in programmes, changes in degree structures and in curricula and the use of ECTS are looked at. Turkey had already the two cycle degree structure (except in medicine, veterinary and pharmacy programmes) and did not make any change in this sense. Curricula are rather rigid in Turkey. For the first cycle, some common courses for

[80] "Private tutoring can be defined as the education outside the formal schooling system where the tutor teaches particular subject(s) in exchange for a financial gain." (Tansel & Bircan 2003: 1)

universities are determined by the YÖK. For the graduate level programmes, universities determine the curricula and degree requirements within the framework defined by the Interuniversity Board[81]. The system in this sense does not encourage institutional level diversity. In addition to this, elective courses are available in less than 25% of the study programmes (CHEPS, ECOTEC & INCHER 2010b: 23). Until now, there has not been any initiative for curriculum reform or the modularisation of courses. The Bologna Experts stated it as a priority issue for their work in 2008-2009 (Council of Higher Education/Bologna Process website[82]).

The credit system, similar to the North American system, has already been widely applied in Turkey. The credits are based on the weekly lecture and half of the weekly laboratory or practicum hours. Legislative changes are made concerning the use of the ECTS. Since 2006, the use of the ECTS became obligatory in all higher education institutions without replacing the existing national credit system. The ECTS is used parallel with the national credit systems only for mobility programmes. At the moment, the national credit system is not fully compatible with the ECTS, i.e., credits are not defined based on the student workload and learning outcomes. The ECTS is functional only for mobility purposes.

In Turkey, higher education includes formal, open and external education. Since 1982, distant education, named as the Open University, is offered by the Anadolu University. The Open University is established with the idea of providing the labour market the demanded semi-skilled workers and absorbing a part of the demand for higher education (Anadolu University website[83]). The education is provided through radio and television broadcasts and via internet. Students are admitted based on their university entrance scores, like in formal education. The Open University offers 31 associate and 12 bachelor degree programmes and has 35-45% of the student population. It shall be noted that many students are registered at the same time in formal degree programmes. Distant education is considered successful in offering higher education to civil servants and working people. It is mostly pursued with the expectation of a promotion in employment (Mizikaci 2006: 83). There are also many students who are registered in a formal study programme and continue distant education as their second degree. However, Open University degrees do not have high labour market reputation (Mizikaci 2006: 86). Since 2001, the Anadolu University offers also the "Second University" programme for first cycle students and graduates. These students and graduates can apply for distant education programmes other than they are studying in or graduated from and are admitted without university entrance exam (Anadolu University website[84]). External education students do not have to participate in all courses but are only required to take the relevant exams. These students take their courses at non-traditional times.

In addition to this, the "Second Education" opportunity exists. This kind of education starts in the end of the formal education day and a fee is charged. Like for regular higher education study programmes, the amount of the tuition fee is decided based on the study programme, higher education institution and the duration of studies and cannot be less than 50% of the tuition costs of regular formal education. The applicants are placed by the ÖSYM according to their cumulative scores. The structure and content of teaching is the same with regular

[81] This is a national level board dealing with academic and research related issues.

[82] http://bologna.yok.gov.tr/?page=yazi&c=0&i=80

[83] http://www.anadolu.edu.tr/akademik/fak_aof/

[84] https://www.anadolu.edu.tr/ogrenci_isleri/sinavsiz_ikinci_universite.aspx

higher education programmes (Higher Education Law Amendment for Secondary Education[85]).

The main form of higher education study is full time in Turkey. Part-time and evening courses are available in some of the universities, but do not lead to a degree. In addition to this, "almost all the universities have 'continuous education centres'" (Ertepinar 2006: 16). These centres provide informal education to support lifelong learning. They do not have programmes leading to degrees and these courses are not recognised in formal degrees.

In Turkey, short cycle programmes (associate degree – *ön lisans*) were already available as part of the first cycle. Short cycle programmes last two years. The degree holders can go to the employment market or continue to bachelor studies, but not master's. If associate degree holders prefer to continue in the same field of studies, their courses can be recognised for their bachelor studies. The short cycle degree is important for increasing the access to higher education for applicants coming from vocational secondary schools. They have the right for admission without university entrance exam. Furthermore, the required points for these programmes are rather low compared to the bachelor programmes.

Although these changes have value for the social dimension, the analysis of the relevant reform documents and interviews (BP1 interview 2009, BP3 interview 2009) show that the changes to increase the variety of learning provisions have not been carried out with a concern to increase the participation of underrepresented groups or supporting the completion of studies, as such. The underlining idea has been increasing the compatibility of the structure in general or meeting the demand.

Student Services

The Republic of Turkey General Directorate of Higher Education Credit and Hostels Institution (*Yüksek Öğrenim Kredi ve Yurtlar Kurumu - KYK*) is the main responsible institution for the provision of accommodation and financial aid for students. KYK was established in 1961 and since 2010 it is affiliated to the Prime Ministry (it used to be under the National Ministry of Education). According to the Higher Education Law, higher education institutions have the responsibility for the provision of social services to meet the social and psychological needs of students, i.e., health, counselling, accommodation, food, sports and leisure time services. The provision of these services depends on institutional resources and initiatives.

Guidance and Counselling

According to the Higher Education Law, emotional, social, educational and career counselling are to be provided by the universities. In the KYK dormitories psychological counselling is available. Despite no available data, it is possible to state that most of the old universities offer such services and most of the new universities do not. The Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process Report (CHEPS, ECOTEC & INCHER 2010a: 56) looked at the availability and quality of i. educational, ii. psychological, iii. disability and iv. career counselling and guidance services. Accordingly, these services are either almost unavailable (i&iii) or are limited and/or have low quality (ii& iv).

The regulation on "Higher Education Institutions Disabled Students' Counselling and Coordination" is issued in 2010 on the services for students with disabilities. According to this regulation, a commission within the YÖK is established in order to define and address

[85] www.yok.gov.tr

educational and physical needs of students with disabilities. This commission is composed of a YÖK board member (leader), three academics and a representative of students with disabilities. The regulation also establishes another unit to prepare relevant reports for the commission and similar units in the higher education institutions. The main idea is to support the progression of higher education studies of students with disabilities. Despite being a development after 2001, it is not possible to see a direct link to the social dimension. This development mostly relates to the national demand for it (BP1 interview 2009).

Financial Support

The KYK provides financial support for university students at all cycles who are citizens of the Republic of Turkey. Loans and grants are available for students and are distributed on the basis of merit and need. It is not possible to receive both types of aid at the same time. Loans are the main form of aid. Students who prolong their study duration or earn minimum wage or more are not eligible for the grant. There are two types of loans: a study loan to support daily expenditures and a contribution loan to support paying tuition fees. The repayment instalments for these loans start two years[86] after graduation and an interest rate[87] is applied. The amount of the loan in 2010 is 100€ per month for first cycle students, 200€ for second cycle students and 300€ for doctoral students. Municipalities, foundations and non-governmental organisations can also provide financial aid for students. These are also mostly merit and need based and available for a small number of students. As a different example, one of the big firms in Turkey, Koc, provides scholarships for people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds to study in vocational education. "The project was launched in 2007 aiming to provide scholarships to graduates of secondary schools for at least one student from each of Turkey's eighty-one provinces to continue their education at a vocational school" (Mizikaci 2008: 536).

Currently, all applicants can receive a study loan and all first cycle students (except students from foundation universities and Second Education programmes) can receive a contribution loan. Students with physical disabilities, orphans and former institutionalised children, children of martyr and war veterans, national sportsmen and terror victims receive grants unconditionally[88]. They are also available for poor successful students. The grants are available only since 2004 and a small number of students (around 8%) receive them.

Despite being widely available, loans do not provide sufficient amount of income for students' monthly expenses. According to the EUROStudent data, the main source of income for students is their families (Orr et al. 2008: 101). During the last decade, besides the introduction of grants for a very limited percentage of students, the financial aid system has not had a significant change. Traditionally, it aims at supporting students through their higher education studies and continues to be so.

General Student Services

The KYK is the main responsible institution for the provision of accommodation. The KYK provides dormitories in 80 provinces (out of 81) for all students. Students can benefit from dormitories for free in case of need (In 2009, 5,766 students stayed for free).

[86] In case of master's studies, repayment starts four years after graduation.

[87] The interest rate is calculated by the State Statistics Institute based on the wholesale price index and the total repayment cannot be more than three times the amount of the total loan received by a student. (www.kyk.gov.tr)

[88] These students are eligible for free accommodation as well.

In most of the cases, the KYK builds the dormitories and then devolves the management to the universities. In addition to the ones devolved by the KYK, many universities build their own dormitories. The private dormitories mushroomed after the recent expansion of the system.

Table 6.9 The Coverage and Usage of the KYK Dormitories[89] in Turkey (2002-2009)

	% of 1st cycle students staying in dormitories	Total capacity (1,000)	In use (average, 1,000)	% of dormitories in use	Monthly fee (€)
2002	16.8	188			12
2003	16.2	190			15
2004	15.4	192			19
2005	14.4	196			23
2006	14.1	200	160	79.8	28
2007	13.9	204	157	77.0	33
2008	13.4	212	161	76.0	38
2009	13.0	225	183	81.2	42

Source: Prepared based on the KYK data (kyk.gov.tr)

Table 6.9 shows that the KYK dormitories are used by only around 15% of the students and always have unused capacity, despite their low prices. According to the EUROStudent III data, majority of students prefer other alternatives, such as a private shared apartment or staying with family/relatives. The fact that the KYK dormitories are not preferred by students indicates the low quality of the service.

In Turkey, all students of state universities receive health services from their higher education institutions, either through the medical faculty of the university or the special medical centres for students and university personnel.

Additionally, higher education institutions are responsible for providing social services to meet social needs, such as food, and leisure time activities. To this aim, they are responsible for building reading halls, cafes, restaurants, theatres, sport halls and camping sites. Study rooms and libraries are widely available in the dormitories or in universities. Most of the higher education institutions offer subsidised food services. In addition to this, depending on the agreement between the universities and the municipalities, students get subsidised local transportation.

6.3.6. Conclusion

In Turkey, there has not been a traditional policy concern for ensuring equality of opportunities in access to higher education. The governments took action to increase access to higher education only from the 1990s onwards. These actions mainly target at absorbing the excess demand rather than widening participation to underrepresented groups. Even though the system capacity increased substantially during the last decade, unevenly developed secondary education system and high vertical diversification of the higher education continues to reproduce existing inequalities.

[89] The data on the total capacity of dormitories (KYK+university+private) are not available.

Concerning the awareness of the social dimension, it is possible to observe knowledge on it among the national Bologna Process actors. Yet, this awareness has not triggered action. It is not possible to see the social dimension as a priority action area in the national Bologna Process agenda. This can be explained with the lack of reform suggestions from the Bologna level as well as the traditional lack of concern for achieving participative equity in higher education. In addition to this, students are not actively involved in policy making processes; the student councils are in the very beginning of their development and highly supervised by the YÖK. This means lack of a vital actor for the promotion of the social dimension in Turkey.

The access to higher education increased noticeably during the last decade, despite remaining around 30%, with the opening of new universities. It is not possible to observe any change concerning the participation of people from underrepresented groups. The existence of such groups is officially denied and hence there is no data collection.

Concerning the implementation of the social dimension relevant means it is not possible to observe significant changes in Turkey. The admission mechanism is defined completely based on formal qualifications and has a decreasing transparency. It functions in an exclusive way and there has not been any change in this respect, apart from easing the transition from vocational secondary education to higher education. The provisions and modes of higher studies have not changed either. The Bologna Process reforms that claim to increase flexibility, such as the ECTS and qualifications framework, are introduced only to increase the comparability of the higher education system. Various modes of education, i.e., open education, second university or secondary education options, short cycle, have been offered either for the improvement of qualifications of employees or to absorb the excess demand. The grants are introduced in 2004 for a very limited proportion of students. A concern for students with disabilities can be seen at the discourse level, yet without any impact so far or a connection to the social dimension. Apart from that there has not been a significant change in the provision of student services in Turkey. In conclusion, it is not possible to observe changes in the social dimension relevant means directly due to the social dimension of the Bologna Process.

6.4. Discussion

The case studies showed different motivation factors for the countries to become a Bologna Process member. Some of the common factors, not only for the selected countries, but for most of the Bologna countries, are the emergence of new means to solve the existing problems of higher education, i.e., a new policy platform to promote the alternatives that were already in the agenda of national policy actors (means for their own ends), taking part in this new European formation and enhancing the internationalisation of higher education systems. Considering that all three countries were engaged in Bologna Process before the entrance of the social dimension in the Bologna Process, their priority areas were degree structures, mobility or quality assurance.

Concerning the situation in countries with regards to the social dimension issues, the education system in Finland is well-known for being the most inclusive at all levels. In this sense, the Finnish case is almost an ideal example for the social dimension. In Finland, the equality principle has a decisive role in higher education policies and legislations, like in other legal and social institutions of the country. Higher education policies are developed to

ensure equal opportunities for everyone to participate in high quality education. The equality principle is regarded also in the distribution of financial and other social benefits to ensure the successful completion of studies (The Finnish Ministry of Education 2008: 15). Many provisions are made independent of the socio-economic background of individuals on equality basis. Major factors that enable the relatively high participative equity can be identified as free education at all levels, higher education as a large and widespread sector in a small country and the belief in education. The highly homogeneous social composition of Finland has also been influential in the achievement of participative equity. The population is composed of Swedish speaking Finns, Sami people, Roma people and Russians most of whom are highly assimilated in Finland, and a small immigrant population. In addition this, there are not huge gaps between the income groups. While the equality principle has been an advantage in including all groups to higher education of a homogeneous society, it can be controversial concerning the inclusion of people from immigrant backgrounds who have different conditions and needs than the majority. Hence, the changing ethnic composition of the country is putting new challenges to the policies which have worked well so far. The equality rationale in a way delayed the development of policies addressing needs of disadvantaged groups such as minorities, foreigners or people with special needs. Recently, the ministry has started to develop policy measures targeting students with immigrant backgrounds. Unlike Finland, Germany and Turkey have highly heterogeneous societies with higher percentages of immigrants or ethnic and linguistic minorities. This has been the fact for a longer time in these countries, despite the changing level of recognition by the policy makers. In Germany, participation policies were strongly oriented to the inclusion of underrepresented groups especially in the 1960s and the 1970s. Differently, Turkey has not had clear participation policies or any observable concern for the democratisation of higher education.

Finland and Germany have a longer history of higher education. The size of their systems expanded also relatively early, in the 1950s Finland had 10, Germany 138 and Turkey only 3 universities. Considering the population of the countries, in Finland and in Germany universities were available for larger part of populations. This availability increased with the expansion policies of the 1960s-1980s. In this period, even regional distribution of higher education institutions can be seen as a common policy. Turkey experienced some form of regionalisation of higher education during the last decade without a clear claim for participative equity. Finland and Germany established the non-university higher education sector to enable the massification of the higher education system.

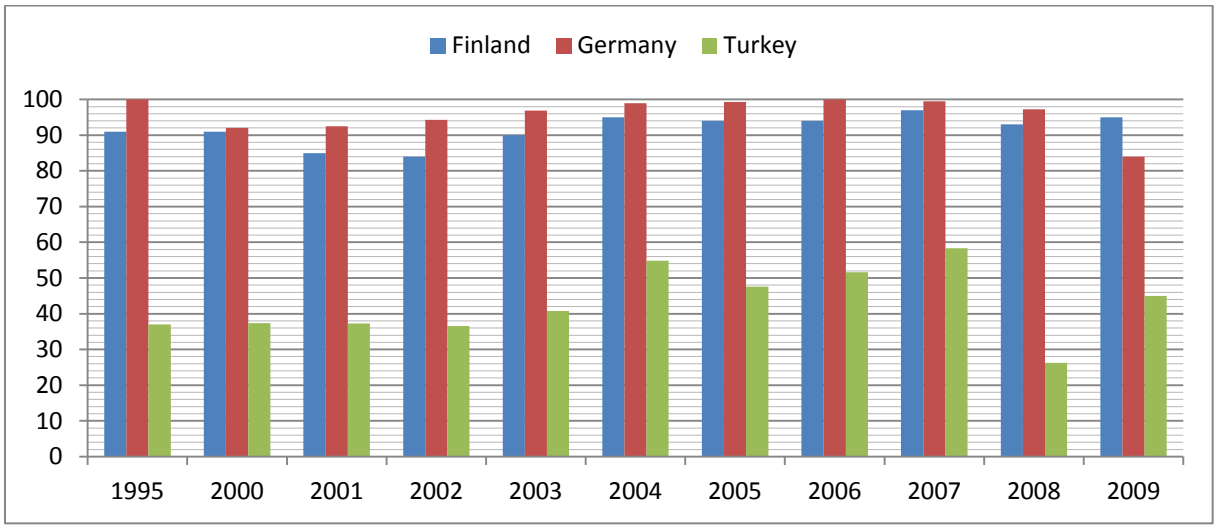
Another system level factor is the availability of private higher education. It can be considered as a measure to increase the size of the system. In Finland, the non-university sector is mostly privately owned but tuition fee free and comprises around half of the student body. In this sense, it is not possible to talk about the negative impact of the private sector on the access of poor people. In Germany and in Turkey, the share of private higher education is rather marginal. While Germany does not specifically promote the establishment of private higher education institutions, in Turkey it is promoted as a way to expand system. During the last decade the number of foundation universities increased by 270%.

The cost of higher education is another factor. In Finland, free education at all levels is considered as the key factor for equity of opportunities. In Germany, the right to charge tuition fees is given during the last decade and by 2010 11 *Länder* charge tuition fees to

changing groups of students and varying amounts (please see Annex V for the current situation). In Turkey, existing contribution fees did not change during the last decade. It is possible to expect a negative impact of them on people coming from poorer backgrounds.

In access to higher education, secondary education creates an important basis, especially considering that formal qualifications create the main route to higher education in the selected countries. As for the entry rates to secondary education, Finland and Germany have almost the entire age cohort at schools. In these countries, the schools are evenly developed throughout the countries. In Turkey, the entry rates are rather low and the availability and quality differs by regions. Figure 6.10 shows the upper secondary graduation rates which give an approximation of prospective students.

Figure 6.10 Graduation Rates (first time) Upper Secondary (1995-2009)



NOTES: Up to 2004, graduation rates at upper secondary level were calculated on a gross basis and late on and for countries with available data, graduation rates are calculated as net graduation rates (i.e. as the sum of age-specific graduation rates).
There is a break in the series between 2008 and 2009 due to a partial reallocation of vocational programmes into ISCED 2 and ISCED 5B in Germany
In Turkey, in 2007 the duration of secondary education was increased from 3 to 4 years which reduced the graduation rates for 2008.

Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2011, http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/62/3/48630687.pdf

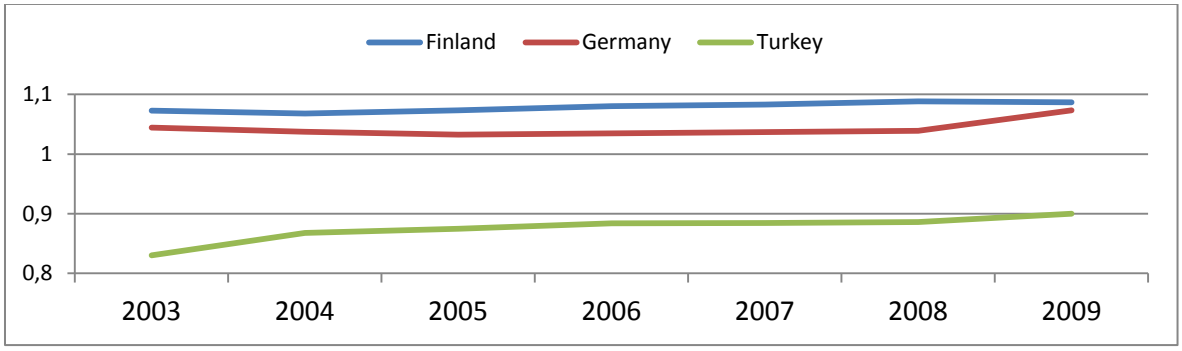
While secondary education is compulsory in Germany, in Finland the social awareness on the importance of education can be an explanation for the high rates. In Finland this situation creates a solid base for higher education. In Germany, the stratified schooling system filters candidates for higher education. In this sense, not all the graduates are eligible for higher education. As discussed above, the abundance of alternatives to higher education in a way breaks the link in-between. In Turkey being a secondary school graduate gives the required eligibility to apply for higher education. Even though the proportion of the population with this eligibility is rather low, there is an increasing trend.

6.4.1. Goals

As it has been shown by the entry rates of the countries, Finland has more than 70% of its corresponding age group in tertiary education. Corresponding figures for Germany and Turkey are around 40% and 30% respectively. It is possible to argue that the expansion of higher education is a necessary condition for underrepresented groups to participate in

higher education. Yet, as it has been observed in massified higher education systems, increasing the rates of enrolment is necessary but not sufficient to ensure participative equity. While there is an increasing trend in Turkey with the establishment of new universities, the line is rather horizontal for Germany and Finland.

Figure 6.11 Gender Parity in Higher Education (2003-2009)



Source: OECD Stat, http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx

Figure 6.11 shows the overrepresentation of women in the whole student body in Finland and Germany (ISCED 5A+5B). Concerning female participation in higher education, there is a policy concern on the underrepresentation of women in natural and technical sciences and advanced level of studies. This concern reveals indeed the concern for the promotion of certain study fields rather than ensuring participative equity. Otherwise, the underrepresentation of men in social sciences and humanities should have been a policy concern as well. This situation suggests the emphasis on economically beneficial study fields. In Turkey females are still underrepresented. There is no national policy for better inclusion of women in higher education.

As discussed in the country sections, statistical information on underrepresented groups is rather scarce. Even if there would be information on the composition of the student body, most of the time these are not compared with the corresponding groups in the population which makes any conclusion on representation impossible. The EUROStudent survey results are in this sense very valuable. Showing distributions in the exhibition of the data is highly guiding. However, the data set has serious problems, as has been discussed in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, the study results could suggest an approximation. Often in similar surveys, students from lower educational and occupational backgrounds are found to be underrepresented. According to the EUROStudent results (Orr et al. 2008), while Finland has such underrepresentation rather low, in Germany and Turkey social-economic background dependent discrepancies are rather high. The data concerning other underrepresented groups are not available at all.

Considering the completion of studies goal, empirical data on the survival, dropout or graduation rates for these countries would have been helpful; albeit, not available. This situation can be explained with the difficulties of collecting international, comparative data on these issues. The enrolment and graduation registration practices differ significantly in different countries. While in Turkey this situation is rather straightforward, the continuous expansion of the system hinders the calculation of valid statistical results.

6.4.2. Means

6.4.2.1. Admission Mechanisms

In admission to higher education, the formal equality is ensured in all countries, i.e., anti-discrimination in access to higher education is secured by law. The admission practices vary in the countries. Yet, admission based on merit is an observable pattern. This situation triggers off a severe competition in cases of entrance exams. Especially in Turkey, applying strictly merit-based admission criteria to everyone is as an obstacle to achieve participative equity. In Finland, admission is administered at the institutional level and also merit-based. The policy makers recognise the bottlenecks and consider possible measures. In Germany, a fragmented merit-based assessment can be observed. Potential applicants are already filtered in the previous levels of education. In this case, even though, there is no fierce competition in access, the merit-based system reproduces the existing inequalities.

Considering the permeability in admission, in Finland and in Germany measures for the recognition of prior learning are taken. Turkey did not take any action in this sense. This could be explained with the policy concerns in Finland and Germany on ageing societies, which is not yet a big concern in Turkey with its young population and the emphasis on knowledge economy. Apart from this, it is not possible to observe a substantial change in the selected countries' admission mechanisms and no change due to the social dimension.

6.4.2.2. Variable Learning Provisions

Similar to recognition measures, the provision of variable study provisions can be considered as a lifelong learning and degree structure means. All case study countries took some action with respect to these means within the Bologna Process context, i.e., the use of the ECTS, the development of national qualifications frameworks and the change of curricula and degree structures (except in Turkey). Yet, none of them referred to the social dimension, while implementing these changes.

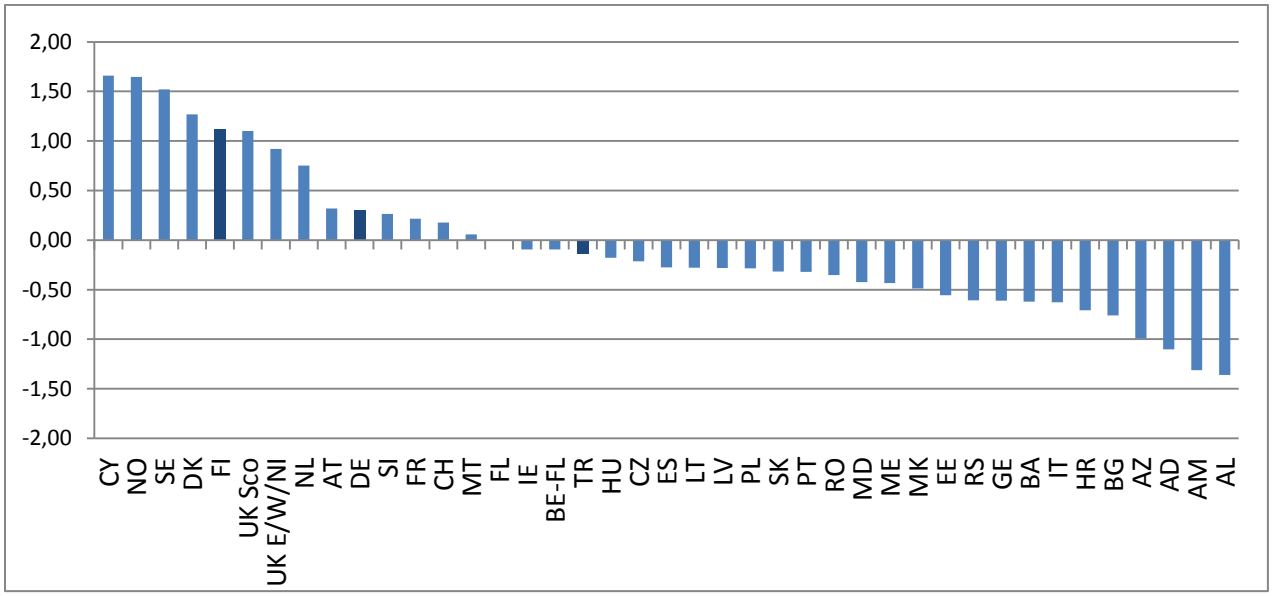
Variable study modes (part-time, open or distance education, e-learning, etc.) have traditionally been offered in all case study countries. These modes were developed to meet the demand for higher education and offer possibilities to gain a degree for adult learners or learners with employment.

6.4.2.3. Student Services

Student services are defined as the only direct means for the social dimension. All case study countries offered student services already. There are differing emphases in the development and the provision of the services for students. Especially, in Finland and Germany, ensuring financial aid for students is a principal element. In Finland, student aid is distributed independent of parents' income, while in Germany it is highly dependent on the parents'/personal income, as well as other family related factors (e.g., number of siblings studying). In Finland and Germany most of the financial aid for students and their parents are not paid back. In Turkey, loans create the main form of student financial aid; however, not the substantial part of student budget. In the Independent Assessment Report, it is possible to find compiled indicators on student finances in the Bologna Process countries. The indicators are comprised of i. the monthly median amount of scholarships, grants and loans for students provided by public authorities (i.e. the municipal, regional or national level) in euros (Orr *et al*. 2008), ii. the percentage of students receiving this aid (Orr *et al*. 2008), iii. financial aid to students as a percentage of total public expenditure on education (ISCED 5&6) (Eurostat, 2005), iv. the percentage of GDP devoted to tertiary education

(OECD, 2005), and v. payments to higher education institutions from the monthly student income (Orr *et al*., 2008). The financial aid amounts are corrected with the purchasing power parity. Figure 6.12 illustrates the combined scores. Zero being the average score of all countries, Finland (1.17) stands as one of the countries with the highest levels of financial support for students, Germany (0.31) a little above the average and Turkey (-0.14) a little below. However, the score does not take into account the financial aid for students' parents (e.g., tax exemptions and child allowance) which composes a big share of student indirect financial aid in Germany.

Figure 6.12 Relative Level of Direct and Indirect Financial Aid for Students in Bologna Countries



Source: CHEPS, ECOTEC&INCHER (2010: 56)

Other forms of student services, i.e., counselling and guidance and services for daily matters also follow similar pattern of provision in the three case study countries. During the last decade, while Finland did not have a substantial change in the system, Turkey introduced grants for a limited number of students in 2004 and Germany made the BAföG aid more accessible for students from immigrant backgrounds and increased the age of eligibility to receive the BAföG aid at the master's level of studies. These changes are caused by internal dynamics of the countries. Only the increasing age limit can be related to the Bologna Process, but to the change of degree structure rather than to the social dimension.

6.5. Conclusion

The national Bologna actors in the selected countries had different understandings of the social dimension in the beginning (2001) and this understanding became similar after 2007 with the explicit definition of the participative equity goal in the London Communiqué. Concerning the level of awareness, it is possible to conclude that most of the national level Bologna actors are aware of the social dimension in the selected countries. The case studies revealed three different statuses of the social dimension, all which of make it a low item in the national Bologna Process agendas. In Finland, the social dimension relevant issues have traditionally been the main drivers for the development of higher education policies. There is a high social and political awareness on the importance of participative equity and this has been reflected on the policies. However, this advanced position of Finland on the social dimension issues made it a low agenda item in the Bologna Process context. As the available

statistics show it has the most inclusive higher education system in the EHEA. Finland was already concerned about the issue, recognised existing problems and took action to solve them. In this sense, the priority was given to other action areas of the Bologna Process that are considered to be problematic such as shortening study durations and reducing dropouts. In Germany, the social dimension relevant items traditionally existed in policies. The existence of awareness on the social dimension relevant issues is confirmed with the long tradition for monitoring the social conditions of students. The Social Survey provides almost all underrepresentation relevant data and is supported by the BMBF for over 50 years. Even if not achieving participative equity, increasing the access to higher education has been a continuous policy concern. However, the social dimension in the Bologna Process context did not make a kick-off effect in Germany. The participative inequities kept their position in the national agenda and they are barely recognisable in the Bologna Process implementations of Germany. In Turkey, the social dimension relevant items traditionally have not been policy concerns; yet, it is possible to observe an awareness of the social dimension among national actors (i.e., YÖK and the Bologna Promoters). The participation policies traditionally have been developed in order to meet the demand for higher education. The concern has been absorbing the demand without paying almost any attention to equality of opportunities.

Considering the measures taken in relation to the Bologna Process, all selected countries focused on structural areas. Indeed, this is a normal reaction to the requirements of the Bologna Process which defined, offered guidelines for and monitored only certain reform areas. This situation is surely an explanation for the lack of action concerning the social dimension of the Bologna Process at the national level. As it is discussed in the social dimension chapter, most of the social dimension means are defined in relation to other action areas and expected to have positive side effects on participative equity. The actors abstained from defining general guidelines of action for the social dimension at the Bologna level. In this sense, when certain means are introduced or changed due to the Bologna Process, it has been related to other areas (e.g., facilitating recognition for mobility, degree structures or lifelong learning) rather than to the social dimension in these three case study countries. Concerning student services, which is the only group of means defined with reference to the social dimension, attracting potential students, supporting the wellbeing of students and ensuring the successful completion of higher education studies have been underlining ideas. In this sense, the social dimension has not brought a new input and did not cause any change.

7. The Social Dimension as an Agenda Item

7.1. Chapters Interlude

As the methodology chapter underlines, the dissertation follows a grounded theory approach and as such has a flexible research design. This means, the research design is not fixed in the beginning of the research, instead develops based on the progression of inductive analysis. In this design, the research questions provide the main frame of work. The first three research questions are:

1. **What does the social dimension of the Bologna Process mean according to the Bologna Process actors? Are there different understandings and if so, how do they differ?**
   These questions are answered through the following sub-questions:
   1.1. What is the role, status and monitoring of the social dimension in the Bologna Process?
   1.2. What are the strategic goals of the social dimension?
   1.3. What are the operational goals of the social dimension?
   1.4. What are the means of these goals of the social dimension?
2. **What is the relationship of the social dimension with the rest of the Bologna Process?**
   2.1. Is there a relationship at all?
   2.2. What is the status of the social dimension among other action areas?
   2.3. Are there common or contrasting goals? Which ones?
   2.4. Are there common means with other action areas? Which ones?
3. **Does the social dimension of the Bologna Process reflect on the national level Bologna Process policies in Finland, Germany and Turkey? How?**
   3.1. Are the main Bologna Process actors of these countries aware of the social dimension? How?
   3.2. Are above mentioned goals and means of the social dimension of the Bologna Process observable in the relevant national policies?
   3.3. Have these policies changed since 2001? If yes, have these changes happened due to the social dimension of the Bologna Process?

Chapter 4 analyses the different understandings of the social dimension and its status in the Bologna Process, hence answers the first two research questions. As the chapter concludes, while it is possible to observe a commonality with respect to its strategic goals, this commonality descends in operational goals and even more in means. The features and status of the social dimension in the Bologna Process agenda are dependent on time and actors. The social dimension became an issue in times and places in which certain actors were paying attention to it or indirectly supporting it; otherwise, it went down to the bottom of the agenda, although not dropped out of it. While this can be considered normal for such a complex policy process to function, the most problematic part is the lack of any policy proposal for the social dimension at the Bologna level. As the answer of question 1.4 reveals, the social dimension does not have clearly defined means to be implemented or guidelines to be regarded and to be continuously and systematically monitored. Instead, the main goal of the social dimension, i.e., achieving participative equity, is expected to happen with the help of the means primarily defined for other action areas. This situation, as the country case studies in Chapter 6 reveals, caused lack of awareness and action. It was not possible to

observe any action taken or any policy change directly due to the social dimension of the Bologna Process in these three countries. This situation naturally raised curiosity about the entrance and persistence of the social dimension in the Bologna Process agenda without a common definition of policy tools and implementation. Therefore, the fourth research question asks:

4. **What is the explanation of the social dimension's existence in the Bologna Process agenda?**
   4.1. How did the social dimension enter into the Bologna Process agenda?
   4.2. Did a "window of opportunity" open for the social dimension? What have been the repercussions for the social dimension?

The research so far showed that the social dimension exists as an element of the Bologna Process; however, does not have implementations related to it. As such, it appears as an item that got into this policy process but could not grow into a proper policy to be implemented. This chapter explains this situation of the social dimension. The fourth research question treats the social dimension as a policy item of the Bologna Process. The dissertation has a policy process perspective from the beginning, though not in a strict sense with its explorative nature. The following sections provide an overview of policy process studies to contextualise the treatment of the issue as a policy item, an overview of the employed theoretical framework (the multiple streams framework) to explain why agenda setting theories are appropriate to provide an interpretation of the social dimension's existence and finally an interpretation of the social dimension through the lenses of the multiple streams framework. By this means, the chapter links the research findings to a mid-range theory, as aimed by the grounded theory approach.

7.2. Policy Process Studies

Studies of policy processes have started in the late 1950s. Lasswell introduced the idea of analysing policy processes in terms of stages and defined seven stages of policy making as "intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, termination and appraisal" (Jann & Wegrich 2007: 43). An underlining notion of this heuristic definition is the logic of applied problem-solving through the recognition of a problem in the agenda setting stage, the definition of solution options by the government in the policy formulation stage, the adoption of an option in the decision making stage, putting the option into action in the implementation stage, and monitoring outcomes and taking necessary actions in the evaluation stage (Howlett & Ramesh 1995: 11). With the growing interest in the field in the 1960s and the 1970s, these stages have been redefined by different scholars (e.g., Brewer & de Leon 1983, May & Wildavsky 1978, Anderson 1975 and Jenkins 1978). Today, the policy process is conventionally divided into the agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation and evaluation stages (Jann & Wegrich 2007: 43). These stages are defined clearly with analytic purposes, but are not assumed to be neat and sequential. The growing of interest also led to development of many theoretical frameworks based on the stages heuristic model explaining policy processes.

Before continuing with the new policy process frameworks, it is necessary to elaborate on policy processes. Policy process studies are complex and challenging due to (Sabatier 2007: 3–4):

- the involvement of a high number of actors from various backgrounds and levels of governance

- the variety of values, interests, perceptions and preferences of the actors
- the long time span needed for the completion of a policy cycle (from the emergence of the problem until the impacts of the implementation)
- the multiplicity of the programmes involved in the same policy domain
- the technicality of the debates among the actors on the problem, possible solutions and impacts

This list of Sabatier is explanatory for the complexity of the policy processes at the Bologna Process, as well. Firstly, the Bologna Process includes various actors, i.e., governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental actors, from national and international levels. These actors have different backgrounds, varying values, interests and perceptions on the problems of higher education and alternative solutions. Secondly, the policy suggestions of the Bologna Process started in 1999 and continued to develop since then. Many studies revealed that it is too early to judge the outcomes of the Bologna Process reforms (cf. CHEPS, ECOTEC & INCHER 2010 and Witte 2006) which confirms the need for a long time span. Thirdly, if higher education is taken as the policy domain of interest, the Bologna Process can be considered as a part in it, but not simply a programme. Fourthly, the debates at the Bologna level involve technical discussions on the development of new curricula, credit systems, degree structures, quality assurance systems, etc. which mostly resulted in national level legal changes. This chapter analyses the social dimension of the Bologna Process from a policy perspective in terms of stages, yet by utilising advanced theoretical frameworks.

Policy processes studies deal with public policies which also deserves a definition. There are various definitions of public policy. Thomas Dye (1972) defines public policy as "anything a government chooses to do or not to do" (cited in Howlett and Ramesh 1995: 4). In this definition the government is perceived as the main agent of policy making and non-governmental actors are assumed to influence but not constitute public policies. Birkland explains this with the government's authority to "act on behalf of the public" (Birkland 2001: 20). Another very essential feature Dye highlights is that governments can also decide to keep the *status quo* by not making any decision on an issue. Non-decision also constitutes public policy (Howlett & Ramesh 1995: 4). Jenkins (1978) defines public policy as "a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve" (cited in Howlett & Ramesh 1995: 5). This definition highlights the multiplicity of actors (governmental and non-governmental) and decisions and defines public policy as a goal oriented action bearing certain limitations. Lowi and Ginsburg (1996) emphasise the nature of action rather than actors. They define public policy as "an officially expressed intention backed by a sanction, which can be a reward or a punishment" (cited in Fischer et al. 2007: xix). Cochran et al. (1999) define public policy as "the outcome of the struggle in government over who gets what" (cited in Birkland 2001:21). This definition highlights that decisions are reflections of power struggles over the distribution of costs and benefits.

When the common points of these definitions are put together, public policy can be defined as government's decisions to do something or nothing as a result of a struggle between various governmental and non-governmental actors. (Non-)Decisions have a justification concern and involve sanctions. Policies can be in the form of "texts, practices, symbols, and discourses that define and deliver values including goods and services as well as regulations,

income, status and other positively or negatively valued attributes" (Schneider & Ingram 1997 cited in Birkland 2001: 20).

7.2.1. On the Agenda Setting

As mentioned above, the policy processes are analysed in terms of stages starting with the agenda setting stage, while taking into account the mentioned complexities of it. The following section provides a discussion on agenda as a concept and agenda setting as a process.

7.2.1.1. Agenda as a Concept

Agenda is "the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention to at any given time" (Kingdon 2003: 3). An agenda can be concrete, e.g., a bill for legislation, as well as abstract, e.g., beliefs about the problems and ways to solve them. Many scholars categorise agendas based on the included issues' closeness to the enactment and implementation (c.f., Birkland 2007, Cobb & Elder 1972, Kingdon 2003).

Kingdon categorises agendas at two levels as the governmental and the decision agenda. The **governmental agenda** includes issues that are under attention of the people in and around government and the **decision agenda** is a smaller set of issues that are seriously considered for authoritative decisions, yet without a promise of an enactment (Kingdon 2003: 166). The governmental agenda is affected by the institutional, political, social and economic structures of the society, as well as the other way round (Kingdon 2003: 229).

7.2.1.2. Agenda Setting as a Process

The agenda setting stage of a policy process includes defining the problem, its solution alternatives, the way and time to push the issue into the governmental agenda and explaining why this issue and not others shall be included in the agenda (Jann & Wegrich 2007: 45). It is the process of selecting a subset out of various issues, problems and ideas which are defended by different actors. According to Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976), it is "the process by which of various groups in the population are translated into items vying for the serious attention of public officials" (cited in Howlett & Ramesh 1995: 105). Kingdon explains the agenda setting process as narrowing down the "set of conceivable subjects to the set that actually becomes the focus of attention" (Kingdon 2003: 3).

There are different explanations on the functioning of this process. Some of these explanations are based on the elevation of issues into agenda subsets (c.f. Cobb, Ross & Ross 1976 cited in Howlett & Ramesh 1995); some others take the problem definition and the competition among actors as the main driver of agenda setting; yet another group highlights the importance of macro level environmental factors such as economic level of development, global politics (c.f., Howlett & Ramesh 1995 and McGrew & Lewis 1992 cited in Parson 1995). Among these, the competition among issues is an explanation to highlight. The agenda setting process is highly competitive because the policy making capacity of the government is not large enough to address all issues and each group of actors wants to ensure that its issues get into the agenda. The process becomes a competition of different problems and solutions of different actors to be recognised by mass public and decision makers (Birkland 1997:8). In this process, to be the actor defining the issue is very important, since "*the definition of the alternatives* [issues] *is the supreme instrument of power*" (Schattschneider 1960: 68).

Nowadays, it is acknowledged that there is a multitude of political, social and ideological factors influencing the agenda setting process. In this context, the impact of different actors' interests, institutions' capacities to act and the coupling of problem recognition and solutions are defined as equally valuable factors (Jann & Wegrich 2007: 47). Taking this variety on board, Kingdon provides the following framework explaining the agenda setting process.

7.3. The Multiple Streams Framework

The multiple streams framework is developed based on Kingdon's research results on agenda setting in the health and transportation policy domains in the federal government of the United States. In 1984 Kingdon published *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*.

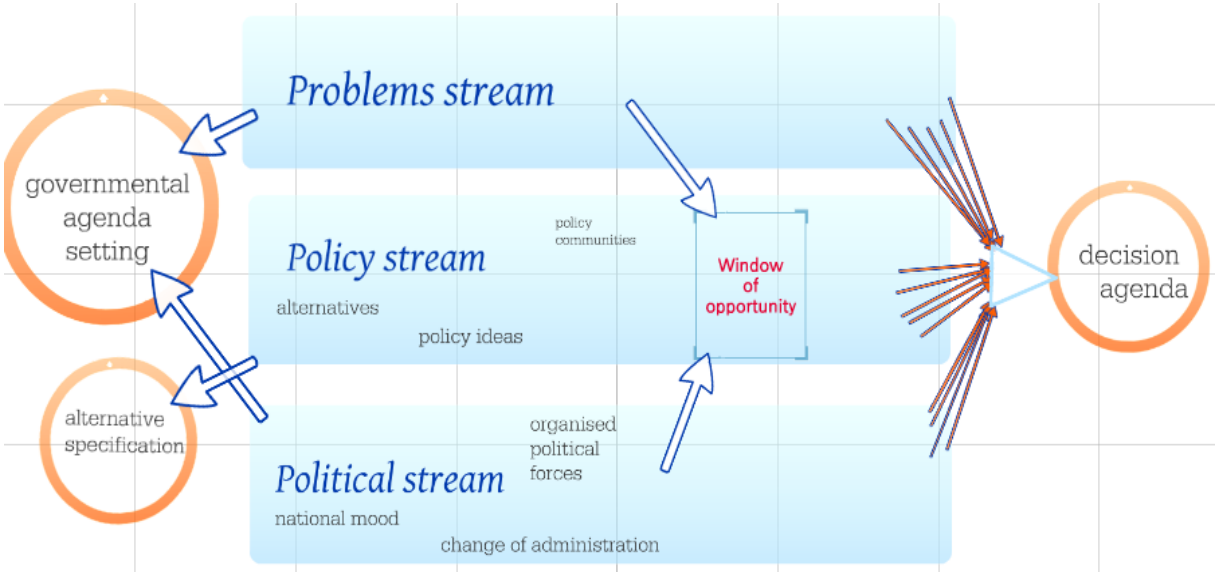
By means of criticising previous common assumptions on agenda setting, Kingdon sets the basic theoretical assumptions of the multiple streams framework. The criticised assumptions are tracing the origins of initiatives, comprehensive-rational decision making and incrementalism (Kingdon 2003: 71). Firstly, the multiple streams framework assumes that the policy initiatives originate from a variety of sources and the ideas involved have a long history. The infinite regression makes it impossible to designate an ultimate origin of an idea (Kingdon 2003: 73). Anyhow, the fundamental point is not where ideas originate from, but where they manage to grow and get enacted (Kingdon 2003: 77). Secondly, the framework assumes that actors are limited in their capacities to act rationally and comprehensively. Furthermore, the actors often do not clarify their goals, since actors of an advocacy coalition might not agree on the goals, while agreeing on a specific proposal. Or, actors' problem definitions or activities can relate to other factors than solving the problem, such as seizing an opportunity which might enhance their resources (Kingdon 2003: 79). Thirdly, the multiple streams framework supposes that both incremental and sudden changes affect agenda setting. As for incremental change, changes in a settled down programme or changes when actors are hesitant to take major steps can be considered (Kingdon 2003: 79). Sudden changes also occur when an issue "hits" the agenda, e.g., disasters, crises (Kingdon 2003: 80).

Based on these assumptions, Kingdon developed the multiple streams framework as a revision of Cohen, March and Olsen's (1972) garbage can model of decision making in organised anarchies. The garbage can model assumes that organised anarchies have i. problematic preferences, ii. unclear technology and iii. fluid participation. Firstly, actors characteristically do not define their preferences precisely. The fuzziness due to inconsistent and ill-defined preferences can facilitate the achievement of goals, since precise preferences would increase the possibility of conflicts among the actors (Kingdon 2003: 84). An organisation "discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of preferences" (Cohen *et al.* 1972: 1). Secondly, even though being able to somehow function, the organisation's members do not necessarily understand its processes (Cohen *et al.* 1972: 1). A member may know what his/her job per se is but in a fragmented way, without comprehending the functioning and aims of the organisation as a whole. The organisation "operates on the basis of simple trial-and-error procedures" (Cohen *et al.* 1972: 1). Thirdly, participants and their investment of time and effort on an issue are not stable. The participation or invitation for participation to a critical meeting and the engagement of each participant tremendously vary in times and places (Kingdon 2003: 84). The garbage can model also defines four separate streams as problems, solutions, participants and choice opportunities and assumes that each stream has a life of its own, largely unrelated to the others. The process can be seen as "a garbage can into which various kinds of problems and solutions are dumped by participants" (Cohen *et al.* 1972: 2). What comes out of the garbage

can is a function of the mix of problems, solutions, participants and participants' resources, as well as time and place. Consequently, some of the problems might be solved, drift away or be totally ignored. The model emphasises that the policy process depends heavily on the coupling of the four normally separate streams (Kingdon 2003: 86). While accepting these main features of the garbage can model, the multiple streams framework differs with its emphasis on "organised" rather than "anarchy" by finding out patterns and structures of the agenda setting process (McLendon 2003: 102).

The multiple streams framework interrogates why and how some issues get into the governmental agenda and others not. This framework analyses the processes of issue definition and entrance into the agenda, rather than analysing the mechanisms of decision making and implementation (McLendon 2003: 101). The framework defines actors, the problems, policy and political streams and policy windows as the main structural elements, as illustrated in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 The Multiple Streams Framework



Source: Own work

One central feature of the multiple streams framework is the distinction it makes between agenda setting and alternative generation. Bringing an issue in the agenda or defining a problem differs from the process of generating and specifying alternatives associated to it (Kingdon 2003: 4). The analytical benefit of this distinction comes up in the following discussions.

7.3.1. Actors

The multiple streams framework discusses actors in terms of their importance, the way they are important and their resources in a policy process. In this discussion, two major groups of actors are differentiated as governmental and non-governmental. The actors inside the government are defined as the administration (i.e., the president, the presidential staff and political appointees), the execution (civil servants) and the legislation. The actors outside the government are interest groups, researchers, academics, consultants, the media, elections related actors and the public opinion (Kingdon 2003: 21).

Among governmental actors, the president is defined as the most influential actor in setting the agenda. This actor's preeminent position is due to the institutional resources under his

control, the veto right, the authority to hire and fire, all kinds of commanding powers over the executive branch, the strong command on public attention and partisan support (Kingdon 2003: 24–25). This position, nevertheless, does not give an exclusive control of the agenda and is not as strong to influence the alternative specification or implementation in the same way (Kingdon 2003: 23). The legislation is stated as the second most important actor in agenda setting. Their resources are legal authority, publicity, blended information coming from different actors and longevity (Kingdon 2003: 37). Civil servants are defined as the most influential actors of alternative generation. Bureaucrats draw their powers from resources like longevity in the office, detailed expertise on the programme/fields and relationships with the legislation and interest groups (Kingdon 2003: 32-33). Civil servants are influential in the specification of alternatives (i.e., content of subjects) and in their implementation rather than deciding the subject itself (Kingdon 2003: 31).

Among non-governmental actors interest groups are defined as the most important actors of agenda setting. The resources of interest groups are electoral advantages (i.e., ability to affect elections due to being able to mobilise their sources - members, sympathisers, wealth, etc.), their impact on economy (e.g., strikes) and ability to present unified demand (Kingdon 2003: 52–53). Even though interest groups would be expected to promote new items or advocate proposals, Kingdon concludes that much of the interest group activity in agenda setting is composed of blocking items, proposing amendments and substitutes. Interest groups have more negative activities than positive since they want to protect the benefits and privileges they already have (Kingdon 2003: 67). The most prominent interest group activity is attaching alternatives to rising agenda items. Another non-governmental actor is composed of academics, researchers and consultants whose activities are more on alternative specification than on agenda setting. Politicians can ask for ideas or solutions from them in handling an issue (Kingdon 2003: 55–56). The media as an actor is conventionally thought of as a strong agenda setter; however, the multiple streams framework argues against it. Despite the media's clear impact on public opinion, its impact is much less on the governmental agenda. The issues covered in the media are considered as short term aggravations rather than significant issues (Kingdon 2003: 58). The media has an informing function, by and large, about what is happening in the government, rather than proposing new items to the governmental agenda (2003: 59). Elections related actors, i.e., campaigners and political parties, create another group of non-governmental actors whose power is mainly due to the impact of elections on the agenda and actors. These actors can influence the governmental agenda; yet, they are not seen as especially important actors (Kingdon 2003: 61–64). The public opinion can shape the governmental agenda either by encouraging "to do something" or by constraining "from doing something" (Kingdon 2003: 65). The public opinion agenda is largely shaped by the media which reports on what has been done rather than creating and introducing new ideas. Therefore, it is the governmental agenda highly influencing the public opinion agenda (Kingdon 2003: 67).

The boundary between these groups of actors is not always very clear since some actors are involved in the activities of either groups or traffic in and out of government. Open communication channels enable the flow of ideas, values and information and hence form bridges between these two groups of actors. The distinctive feature of the actors inside the government is their exclusive formal authority of decision making which is granted by legislation and requires accountability in return (Kingdon 2003: 44).

Apart from governmental and non-governmental, Kingdon clusters actors as visible and hidden actors. Visible actors comprise the president, political appointees, the mass media and elections related actors and hidden actors comprise specialists, civil servants, academics and researchers and interest groups (Kingdon 2003: 70). While visible actors are more influential in agenda setting, hidden actors are more influential in alternative specification which can result in an authoritative decision. This can be reasoned with the needed resources and incentives to perform each task. Agenda setting would require publicity and authoritative governmental positions. Alternative generation and the preparation of detailed policy proposals would require knowledge on technical details and commitment to the issue. These are tendencies rather than clear-cut categories (Kingdon 2003: 69). This clustering also influences the agenda status of an issue. If an issue is pushed into the governmental agenda by visible actors, it has a higher chance to rise in the agenda and *vice versa*, if visible actors do not pay attention to an issue in the agenda, it is dampened.

None of the mentioned actors is able to control the whole policy making process or even a single stage of it. Some of the actors are more dominant in defining the agenda, but then not in alternative specification. The policy process goes through a complex interaction of all actors. Even though the actors are not omnipotent to change or control large events or structures, they can still anticipate and try to bend them as much as possible according to their own interests. Theoretically, all actors can be involved in all streams, i.e., in problem recognition, in policy generation and in political activities. Practically, there would be some specialisations, e.g., academics are more involved in policy generation and politicians more in political activities (Kingdon 2003: 87). The impacts of major social, political and economic factors are introduced into agenda setting through their impact on actors' perceptions and interpretations.

7.3.2. Streams and Coupling

The multiple streams framework has five main elements in explaining how agenda setting happens. The framework identifies three separate and independent streams, i.e., the problems, policies and political stream, which have their own internal dynamics and rules. (Please see Figure 7.1). If these streams are "coupled" at critical points in time, when there is an open "policy window", by policy entrepreneurs, the emergent package has a higher chance to become an authoritative decision. The following sections introduce the micro level dynamics and progress of each stream as well as their macro level convergence. The framework focuses on the point when streams come together and on explaining the coupling of the three streams rather than their relations in other times.

7.3.2.1. The Problems Stream

A problem is a condition that actors want to change, not necessarily with a solution at hand (Kingdon 2003: 109). The problems stream is composed of the conditions which governmental policy makers consider, perceive as a problem and focus their attention on, as opposed to the conditions they ignore. Struggles to define a problem and the way it is defined have critical consequences. Kingdon underlines the "political stakes" in problem definition. The way problems are defined decides who will get the burden and who will get the benefit. If an actor is content with the status quo, s/he would argue that there is not any problem. Each actor would define a problem according to his/her own benefit.

Values, comparisons and categories influence the translation of conditions into problems. **Values** impact the way a person perceives the world (Kingdon 2003: 110). For instance, when one considers access to higher education as a human right and governmental action is

needed to guarantee it, that lack of access becomes a problem. In another occasion, one might consider access to higher education as something good but not a right to be ensured through governmental action; then the differences in access remain as conditions. **Comparisons** influence problem definition by making prominent what others achieve or have, if one did not achieve or does not have them. The condition of lagging behind is defined as a problem. For instance, low participation rates in higher education in a country compared to other countries is considered as a serious problem. That is why it would be more influential for policy makers to see it in an international comparative report than in national statistics. **Categories** influence problem definition by structuring the way one perceives a problem when it is in category A and when it is in category B (Kingdon 2003: 111). For instance the perception of higher education as a public or a private good would change the perception of participative equity as a problem.

Kingdon discusses indicators, focusing events and feedback as mechanisms that influence the focus of attention of policy makers. These can increase awareness and lead to the recognition of a problem (Parsons 1995: 193, Kingdon 2003: 90).

Indicators. The results of regular and systematic measurements can show whether there is a problem. Certain indicators are monitored routinely and occasionally (Kingdon 2003: 90). In case of higher education, some routinely monitored indicators are enrolment rates, graduation rates, the percentage of GDP for higher education, etc. Occasional monitoring is issue specific and can point to issues that need governmental attention. The outcomes of the indicators are fed into the governmental agenda as reports and policy makers review their attitudes and positions following these indicators. Since defining problems is the most important activity of agenda setting, the definition of indicators, the methodology of data collection and the ways of interpretation and communication of the results have critical importance (Kingdon 2003: 91). Indicators can demonstrate the scale of and change in problems, yet they by themselves cannot define which issue will rise as a problem and which issues will be neglected (Parsons 1995: 193, Kingdon 2003: 91, Birkland 2007: 73). It is the "interpretations of the data transform them from statements of conditions to statements of policy problems" (Kingdon 2003: 94). One risk in using indicators is the tendency to value quantitative indicators more. Demonstrating countable a condition is considered more powerful compared to demonstrating uncountable conditions (Kingdon 2003: 93).

Focusing Events. Dramatic events (e.g., disasters, crises), the personal experiences of policy makers or catchy symbols can also focus the attention of actors. Crises impact on problem recognition differently depending on the visibility and the structure of the policy domain. For a policy domain which already has the attention of people every day, crises would not have a huge focusing impact (Kingdon 2003: 95). Also, the type of relations with people is important. In some policy fields, interaction is on the individual basis, e.g., health, social care, etc.; in some on the group basis, e.g., transportation. For the former type the problem needs to aggregate before turning into a crisis, for the latter one, a disaster can impinge so many people at once (Kingdon 2003: 95). Personal experiences of policy makers and powerful symbols facilitate drawing actors' attention on already recognised issues (Kingdon 2003: 96-97). Considering these propositions, higher education can be considered as an area with high visibility and less crises impact and acts on the individual basis. It is rather rare for higher education as a policy domain to come across with a disaster.

Feedback of implementations informs policy makers about problems and unanticipated consequences (Kingdon 2003: 100). Feedback can reach policy makers through different

channels, such as regular evaluation results (e.g., regular institutional data collection), informal channels (e.g., complaints and casework) and daily experience (Kingdon 2003: 100). The contents of feedbacks vary as well. They may inform about problems which are due to the mismatch between legislative or administrative intentions and implementation, due to the failure to meet the goals, due to high implementation costs or due to unanticipated consequences (Kingdon 2003: 102).

The budget is a particular type of problem that might promote or constrain the rise of an issue on the agenda. In times of limited budget, less costly programmes rise on the agenda, such as regulatory programmes to keep the costs low, programmes that could decrease costs or initiatives that cost little money and help to save money (Kingdon 2003: 106-107). Kingdon also notes that budget constraint is subject to interpretation. For some policy makers budget deficit can be tolerable to a certain extent and to some others not (Kingdon 2003: 108).

The defined problems do not necessarily stay in the agenda. There are a couple of reasons for problems to drop from the agenda. Firstly, policy makers might believe that they have already solved the problem when they somehow react to it and then turn their attention to somewhere else. Sometimes initiated programmes actually solve the problem. But sometimes, they do not and policy makers shift their attention before seeing if the problem is really solved or if new problems appeared during the implementation (Kingdon 2003: 103). Secondly, some problems, when once addressed, gets all it can. There is no point in keeping it in the agenda and demanding more resources. For instance, it is not possible to show the lack of student financial aid as a problem continuously and demand more. Thirdly, a problem fades away when attempts to solve or to address it fail. If actors, even after a short time, think that it is not going to end up in an authoritative decision, they lose their enthusiasm and do not invest in it anymore. Fourthly, issues can drop from the agenda even without being solved or addressed just because people get used to the problematic conditions. As time passes, people might start to perceive it as a condition rather than a problem. Lastly, the loss of novelty of the issue would drop it out of the agenda. When people think that the problem is boring, they would lose their attention, even though it is still valid (Kingdon 2003: 104).

There are various factors influencing the agenda status of an item. Firstly, the recognition of a pressing problem can bring a high agenda status for an issue. However, there are so many issues searching for attention and the recognition alone is not sufficient to get in or to rise in the agenda. Secondly, the position of relevant solution proposals can increase the agenda status of a problem. As will be discussed in the policy stream, the solution proposal should be meeting survival criteria. Thirdly, the change of prevailing values can cause a new problem definition or the degree of interest group pressure may change the prominence of the issue, independent of the problem (Kingdon 2003: 114). Focusing attention to a problem, but not to other problems is not coincidental. Policy entrepreneurs utilise indicators, focusing events and feedback mechanisms, as well as budget constraints to support or prevent the rise of certain problem definitions and to gather attention of "important" people on that issue (Kingdon 2003: 115).

7.3.2.2. The Policy Stream

The policy stream comprises policy ideas, alternatives, policy communities, policy entrepreneurs and their activities. In explaining alternative generation the multiple streams framework utilises the "primeval soup" analogy which is similar to garbage cans. Numerous ideas float around the policy communities in the "primeval soup". While floating they

collide with each other and make different combinations (Kingdon 2003: 116). The "primeval soup" changes mostly as a result of these combinations and recombinations of existing ideas, rather than mutations or the appearance of new elements in the "soup". Like in the natural selection process, the ideas that manage to survive in the soup are the ones meeting certain criteria (Kingdon 2003: 117).

Policy communities are composed of specialists who are concerned with the same policy domain. These specialists can be governmental as well as non-governmental actors (Kingdon 2003: 117). For instance in the Bologna Process, a group of experts who are all concerned with and affected by higher education policies create the policy communities. Various ideas and proposals floating in the primeval soup are advocated by certain members of the policy communities to be considered seriously. These advocates are called **policy entrepreneurs** (Kingdon 2003: 122). The main feature of policy entrepreneurs is "their willingness to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money – in the hope of a future return" (Kingdon 2003: 122). Policy entrepreneurs sometimes advocate solutions to solve a problem and sometimes search for a problem to attach their "pet solution". A solution becomes a pet when it has other primary incentives than solving the problem. One of such incentives is promoting personal interests, e.g., "the protection of bureaucratic turf – keeping one's job, expanding one's agency [in terms of budget, personnel or programmes], promoting one's personal career", electoral benefits, gaining publicity or increasing credibility. Other incentives can be the desire to promote own values, ideology "or affect the shape of public policy", group solidarity and the joy of being in the game or close to the power (Kingdon 2003: 123).

Policy entrepreneurs are vital for the survival and success of a proposal. Policy entrepreneurs do not let ideas float in the primeval soup completely free. They try to increase their policy proposals' visibility by discussing and presenting them in many forums e.g., conferences, advisory panels, hearings, reports and speeches to mass media (Kingdon 2003: 127). This activity is called **softening up**. Policy entrepreneurs work to "soften up" the environment so that people are familiarised with the new ideas, educated into their proposal. In other words, they prepare the ground, precondition and hence increase the proposal's acceptability as an agenda item when the time comes. By keeping their efforts continuous, policy entrepreneurs keep the issue alive in people's minds and attention (Kingdon 2003: 128).

There are a myriad of proposals floating in the primeval soup to come up on the surface and this can happen to the ones meeting the survival criteria. Kingdon lists the characteristics of viable proposals as "technical feasibility, value acceptability within the policy community, tolerable cost, anticipated public acceptance, and a reasonable chance for receptivity among elected decision makers" (Kingdon 2003: 124). Firstly, specialists need to develop a proposal by paying attention technical details of implementation (Kingdon 2003: 131). Secondly, proposals should be compatible with the values of specialists (Kingdon 2003: 132). Clearly, specialists do not always share the same values; but, there are also many cases that specialists share the same values, agree on the same ideology which is contextualised by national values and principles (Kingdon 2003: 133). In such a discussion the role of ideology is important as well. The impact of ideology is considered to change depending on the policy domain and circumstances. For instance, ideologies are more visible in health, defence or education policies compared to transportation (Kingdon 2003: 135). In discussing the role of ideologies, equity and efficiency are highlighted as important components of governmental

actors' ideologies. Normally, the principle of equity may not be a driver of the agenda, but sometimes proposals redressing imbalances and inequities can strengthen the arguments (Kingdon 2003: 135). Or, a case of inequity can be a driver of the agenda when it threatens political and social stability (Kingdon 2003: 136). Kingdon explains the principle of efficiency as a spreading issue from economy to politics and from policy specialists to a larger political arena. Expected benefits out of the costs of a programme, rather than the amount of the cost itself, have become the dominant concern for policy makers (Kingdon 2003: 137). Thirdly, for a proposal to survive, its future constraints should be well anticipated. Specialists should foresee possible constraints a proposal would face and be able to anticipate if it could come over them. For instance, the costs of a proposal must be within budget constraints and it must be acceptable by the public (Kingdon 2003:138).

As a result of this struggle, i.e., combinations, recombinations, softening-up and meeting survival criteria, even if not a single proposal, a short list of alternatives come on top of the "primeval soup" to be considered for an authoritative decision (Parsons 1995: 193). This process continues with the emergence and diffusion of consensus in a policy community. The diffusion of consensus among specialists has two dimensions: problems and solution alternatives (Kingdon 2003: 139). The recognition and awareness of problems are already discussed in the problems stream section. The diffusion of consensus on alternatives is a theme of the policy stream. In the policy stream the diffusion of consensus is based on persuasion. In this process, policy advocates highlight the familiarity of the proposals to facilitate the diffusion. One way of this diffusion is described as the "bandwagon effect". It is in a way the snowball effect of words. Important people talk about a certain proposal in many places and that makes other people talk about it. "The more a proposal is discussed, the more seriously it is taken" (Kingdon 2003: 140).

It shall be reminded that the availability of a viable alternative is not enough for a high position in the agenda; a problem needs to be attached to a proposal. Such a match raises the issue in the governmental agenda and dramatically increases its chances to get into the decision agenda (Kingdon 2003: 142).

7.3.2.3. The Political Stream

The political stream includes all "political" factors which are listed as national mood, organised political forces and turnover and jurisdiction (Kingdon 2003: 145). Political actors are assumed to compile these factors and judge if their balance favours action.

Despite not being very precise, Kingdon defines the **national mood** as common lines along which a large number of people, not only policy communities, are thinking. These trends of thinking can change from time to time and impact policy agendas and outcomes (Kingdon 2003: 146). The national mood can be thought of as general public opinion; but it is not exactly. For instance, while many survey results or national polls point to one direction of public preference, the governmental actors' perception of the national mood can be quite different than the poll results (Kingdon 2003: 147). This can be thought in terms of the target group of the policy. Another association can be made with social movements, but again not an exact match. Social movements must be organised under a leadership to have a policy impact. Ordinary social movements are not so widespread in the general public, unlike national mood which is assumed to be so (Kingdon 2003: 148). Governmental actors utilise their sense of the national mood to decide which items to promote on the agenda. They would prefer to promote an item if the "ground is fertile" for it; meaning, if the circumstances are favourable for a certain item to flourish and progress in the agenda.

Organised political forces are interest group pressure, political mobilisation and political elite behaviour. Governmental actors perceive and manage organised political forces by looking at the consensuses and conflicts among the organised interests. If all organised forces are pointing to the same direction, governmental actors would move to that direction. If there are conflicts, governmental actors would look for balance or for items that might gain agenda prominence. If they conclude that the tendency is more for an item, then it will be pushed. When the tendency is against an item, it would not necessarily be dropped but governmental actors would develop concerns about possible costs of pushing it (Kingdon 2003: 150). Organised forces seem to work for keeping the status quo. Yet, this would not mean a governmental inertia in decision making. The change of administration or swings of national mood can overcome the opposition of organised forces. Or, the dominant organised interest changes itself. Although the balance of organised forces cannot offer a comprehensive explanation for policy outcomes, it is an important factor for understanding the political stream (Kingdon 2003: 153).

Events within the government are the third element of the political stream. The actors of this element are governmental actors and they affect agendas through two main processes: **turnover and jurisdiction** (Kingdon 2003: 153). Turnover can be in two ways; either due to the change of priorities of important actors or the change of those actors. The former one is already covered when the governmental actors are introduced, i.e., different constraints, strategic calculations and balances may result in different priorities in different times. A new administration means the introduction of new items as well as blocking the rise of some other items to agenda status (Kingdon 2003: 154). Jurisdiction shapes the actors' position and its scope of action in the system and hence defines the patterns of battle over turf (Kingdon 2003: 154). On the one hand, actors who have a stake in the current situation would want to keep existing jurisdictions. This may lead to a stalemate against change or the introduction of new items. On the other hand, the fragmented interests of different groups of actors, as well as fragmented jurisdictions affecting them, would result in competition and this may lead to the quicker rise of an issue in the governmental agenda (Kingdon 2003: 157). Jurisdictional competition may result in stalemate or greater movement. This result would depend on the popularity of the issue. If the issue is considered to be popular enough, then the competition would foster change; if the issue is unpopular then the competition would result in its stagnation (Kingdon 2003: 159).

Consensus building also exists in the political stream, yet in a different way than in the policy stream. In the political stream, consensus building is governed by bargaining instead of persuasion. Coalitions are based on concessions; political actors[90] participate in certain coalitions not necessarily due to believing the virtue of that argument, but the fear of being excluded from possible benefits of participation (Kingdon 2003: 159). The fear of being excluded from benefits or the club is an argument claimed by many scholars in the Bologna Process context (cf. Ravinet 2008). In this bargaining process, initially actors would opt for their positions rigidly, so that they would have something to compromise with. Then comes the times, when all actors see that the bandwagon is rolling and it is time to act to shape the outcomes (Kingdon 2003: 162).

[90] Even though, actors of the political stream are specified as political actors, the fluid participation and trafficking of actors' assumptions of the multiple streams framework should be reminded here.

7.3.2.4. The Policy Window

"The policy window is an opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems" (Kingdon 2003: 165). Indeed, actors wait for those windows to open with their solutions at hand, to be attached to a problem or to be promoted in an opportunity provided by a change in the political stream (Kingdon 2003: 165). A policy window opens for a short period of time and the actors should be ready to take advantage of this opportunity. An open policy window orders awaiting items in the decision agenda. Actors would consider their priorities and support the proposals that have higher chances to pass (Kingdon 2003: 167).

A window opens due to changes in the problems stream (e.g., the recognition of a pressing problem) or the political stream, (e.g., the change of administration or national mood). When a window is opened by an event in the problem stream, the decision makers look for a solution from the policy stream and when it is a political event, the decision makers look for a proposal in the policy stream in order to meet a political exigency (Kingdon 2003: 174).

Windows do not stay open for a long time. There are several reasons for a window to close. Firstly, a problem loses its priority when it is addressed just because they have taken some action concerning the problem. Secondly, actors might fail in their action and would not like to invest further time and resources in that issue. Thirdly, the promoters of a window, i.e., a focusing event, a new administration, etc., have a short impact duration. When they lose their impact, the window closes. Fourthly, political actors change all the time. While one change opens a window, another one can close it. When the specific advocates are not present anymore, the window of opportunity for those proposals closes (Kingdon 2003: 169). Lastly, it closes when there is not a viable alternative at hand at time of an open window. This case is when the advocates did not "soften-up" the policy system before the window opens (Kingdon 2003: 170).

When a window opens, advocates of proposals should take action quickly before it closes. If they miss the opportunity they have to wait for the next window to open. One big risk a waiting period brings is that "the longer people live with a problem, the less pressing it seems". Even though the problem does not change, the people, in time, start to perceive it less as a problem and more as a condition (Kingdon 2003: 170). However, the urgency to seize the opportunity can produce negative effects. Rushing to associate own interests, the advocates might try to attach excessive amounts of requirements to be met which would overload a proposal and decrease its chances to become an implementable policy (Kingdon 2003: 175). This overload can happen due to the scarcity of windows to handle abundant proposals or can be a strategic move of opponents to prevent action, e.g., the overload of many other items can prevent action on a particular item. When a window is seen and when a proposal is made, it is not possible to control the problems attached to it. "This unpredictability and inability to control events once they are set in motion creates a dilemma for the participants in the process" (Kingdon 2003: 177). The situation of the Bologna Process in many countries can exemplify this. It was seen as a driver of many national higher education legislations in signatory countries. When it appeared many actors thought of it as an opportunity to attach their proposals which resulted in the "inflation" of the Bologna Process.

7.3.2.5. Coupling

As described above, in the policy stream solution alternatives constantly float around and search for problems to be attached to or political events to enable their adoption. These

proposals sometimes rise in the governmental agenda when there is a pressing problem or a suitable political event (Kingdon 2003: 172). At critical times, the three streams come together, they **couple**. That is when a problem is recognised and matched with a proposal as its solution, the political climate is right for the acceptance of such a proposal and the constraints are not so strong. At these critical times, an open window of opportunity gives chance to these proposals to rise in the decision agenda.

Reminding the differentiation between governmental and decision agendas, the elements of the problems or political stream[91] can influence the governmental agenda but not the decision agenda. Indeed, none of the streams can influence the decision agenda alone. Issues' chances to rise in the agenda increase when an alternative is coupled to a problem and to events from the political stream, or when politicians justify an alternative as a solution to a problem; in other words, when elements from all three streams are present (Kingdon 2003: 178-179).

Policy entrepreneurs are essential in the coupling of the streams when a window opens. A particular person or a few persons play(s) a vital role in elevating a subject on the agenda and promoting its enactment. In this activity, the expertise, the ability to speak on behalf of others, political connections, negotiation skills and the persistence in the sense of willing to invest large amounts of own resources are important qualifications (Kingdon 2003: 180-181). When a problem draws the attention of decision makers, policy entrepreneurs try to hook their proposal as a solution to it, whether it relates to the problem or not; or, if there is a change of administration, then they try to push their proposal into the new programme (Kingdon 2003: 182).

Sometimes even full coupling is not sufficient for a high place in the governmental agenda. This relates to the capacity of the system. There are many issues of equal competence (i.e., with a problem and a solution attached to it) in the governmental agenda competing to get into the decision agenda. Yet the system does not have the capacity and time to process them all. For instance, human and financial resources of a higher education system may not be large enough to enact necessary and sufficient decisions to establish a national quality assurance system, reform the curricula, promote mobility and ensure financial support all at the same time. This competition is in favour of "big", rather than "small" issues. Small issues need that big issues are not occupying the attention of policy makers anymore to rise in the agenda, so the removal of competition is necessary for their consideration. In the Bologna context, issues seem to get stuck at lower status due to their nature (soft issues *versus* hard reforms) instead of being minor items. Secondly, there are strategic constraints. Actors' strategic considerations would limit the passage of items. Each actor has limited political resources which they would like to invest for the items that have high priority (Kingdon 2003: 184). Another strategic concern is overload. Insistence for acting on all items at once "might jeopardise the items" for which normally action is expected (Kingdon 2003: 185). Thirdly, there can be logical constraints on the number of agenda items to be processed. "Once people in and around government become occupied with one subject, this preoccupation may logically preclude consideration of others" (Kingdon 2003: 185). For

[91] Reminding the differentiation between agenda and alternatives, the governmental agenda is engendered in the problems and political streams and the alternatives in the policy stream (Kingdon 2003: 194).

instance, when the focus is on increasing efficiency (i.e., less costs more outputs), ensuring the availability of funds for disadvantaged groups (i.e., more costs) is logically excluded. Fortunately, the system capacity changes in time and the competition for a higher place in the agenda is not a zero-sum game. Competition is neither the only determinant, nor static; it expands depending on the resources of the actors, specialisation which enables certain actors (e.g., bureaucrats) to attend many specific and routine items at once rather than letting them queue up (Kingdon 2003: 185).

7.3.3. Conclusion

The multiple streams framework explains the entrance of certain issues and not others into the governmental and decision agendas. The framework takes into consideration a variety of actors, the impact of their various material interests and values on their perceptions and actions in setting the agenda. These actors' actions influence the problems, policy and political streams which are independent of each other. Each actor and the dynamics and characteristics of each stream can have prompting or constraining effects on the agenda status of an issue. When two or all of these streams come together, "couple", at critical times and when there is a "window of opportunity" open, policy entrepreneurs have a chance to push their problems or pet solutions into the agenda. The fully coupled issues have higher chances to get into the decision agenda and be seriously considered for an authoritative decision.

7.3.4. The Relevance of the Multiple Streams Framework for the Dissertation

As mentioned above, the policy making cycle comprises agenda setting, decision making, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. The findings so far show that the social dimension is stuck in the agenda setting stage of this cycle. The multiple streams framework is utilised to explain when and how the social dimension became an issue in the Bologna Process agenda and how it could not go beyond the agenda setting stage. This framework is chosen due to its strengths in explaining the agenda setting stage. While various other approaches describe the drivers or the nature of agenda setting, the multiple streams framework explains the way it functions. It opens the "black box" of agenda setting. Especially, the explanations of the streams and their coupling create the most unique part of the framework. Furthermore, the actor-centred approach of the framework complies with the research since it considers the stakeholders as the main determinants of the agenda setting in the Bologna Process. The following section offers *an* interpretation of the research findings through the lenses of the multiple streams framework.

7.4. Looking at the Social Dimension through the Multiple Streams Framework

In Chapter 4, the social dimension understandings of different stakeholders are explored through the inductive analysis of documents as a result of which the following categories emerged:

1. Development: status, role, monitoring
2. Goals-means: strategic goals, operational goals and means
3. Surrounding issues: higher education as a public good and responsibility, student involvement in decision making

There is a high match between the inductively developed categories of the research and the main elements of the multiple streams framework. The main codes of the first category match with the indicators and feedback of the problems stream. The goals defined in the

second category highly comply with problems. In other words, the goals define conditions that are commonly agreed to be changed through governmental action. In a similar way, the means comply with the solution alternatives. The means define the ways of acting on the problems, with or without intending to solve them. In addition to this, as the analysis of the goals-means scheme shows, the international stakeholders have a prominent position in setting the Bologna Process agenda. The following sections interprets the social dimension through the multiple streams framework, with its three streams, the "window of opportunity" in 2001 and the changes that occurred in the three streams after the closing of the window of opportunity.

7.4.1. The Agendas and the Actors

The multiple streams framework defines two groups of actors (governmental and non-governmental), differentiating them based on the formal authority to make public decisions. The formal authority to make decisions has a different nature in the Bologna Process context. The Bologna Process started as an intergovernmental initiative and has neither legally binding documents (except the Lisbon Recognition Convention), nor an elected governing body. The Bologna Process functions based on cooperation and trust among the participants. The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), the BFUG Board and the BFUG Secretariat are the main managing bodies in the Bologna Process. The composition and main functions of these bodies are introduced in 3.4. Bologna Process Actors and Management section. The BFUG includes all official Bologna actors; therefore, its agenda is considered as the *governmental agenda* of the multiple streams framework. The activities of the BFUG members are considered as the main indicators showing the agenda status of the social dimension in the Bologna Process. The ministerial agenda is considered as the *decision agenda*. The ministerial communiqués and declarations are considered as the indicators of the decision agenda, since only after being stated in the ministerial documents the items have a chance to be translated into national agendas. The main policy making actors of the Bologna Process are taken as the members and the consultative members. These actors include representatives of governments, the academic community and other interest groups. Each actor has different priority issues in the Bologna Process depending on its missions and actions.

The *governmental actors*, regarding the multiple streams framework's differentiation criterion, are defined as the ministers or the ministerial level representatives of the 47 countries. The ministers[92] sign the declarations and commit to transfer the agreed issues to their national policy settings. Further features of the actors slightly differ from the classification offered by the multiple streams framework due to the lack of elections at the Bologna level. There is no single actor in the Bologna Process who is extremely important in setting the agenda and who has exclusive executive powers, such as the right to veto and the authority to fire and hire. Such a position is strictly objected by the countries from the beginning. Furthermore, the decisions made at the Bologna level are reinterpreted at the national level and implemented at the institutional and individual level. Considering the level of autonomy of the academic staff and higher education institutions in many countries, it is difficult to assume an omnipotent actor at the Bologna level.

As for the *non-governmental actors*, the absence of elected actors makes the interest groups important actors of agenda setting. It is stated during the interviews that the international

[92] Even though they are referred as ministers, this group of actors is mixed. Country representatives can be civil servants, too.

stakeholders are especially influential during the discussions but not in making the decisions. The international stakeholders of the Bologna Process comprise this group: the EC, the Council of Europe, the UNESCO, the EUA, the ESU, the EURASHE, the ENQA, the EI and the BUSINESSEUROPE. Researchers, academics and consultants also take part in the process. They contribute to the ministerial conferences, the BFUG working groups, the preparation of seminars and various other activities in relation to the development and implementation of the Bologna Process reforms. The position of the media shall also be mentioned here. Kingdon explains in detail why the media is not an agenda setter. In this sense and also taking into consideration that the social dimension has not received much media attention, the mass media is not included as an actor in the analysis. The public opinion has a similar position. There are no election related actors.

As mentioned above, the multiple streams framework differentiates the agenda setting and alternative specification. Within the Bologna Process context, the multi-level governance structure is explanatory. While interest group organisations and ministries can be influencing the governmental agenda, alternative generation takes place only at the national level. At the Bologna Process level, only generic guidelines are produced, rather than strict and detailed measures to be followed.

7.4.2. Streams and Coupling

The multiple streams framework assumes three independent streams, i.e., the problems, policy and political streams, which run according to their own dynamics. This section describes these streams for the social dimension and their coupling.

7.4.2.1. The Problems Stream

Problems are defined as conditions that actors intend to change or consider to change through governmental action. Indicators, focusing events and feedback are mechanisms that facilitate the translation of conditions into problems. In addition to these mechanisms, the values, categorisations and comparisons shape problem definitions. Out of these while indicators and feedback can be applied to the social dimension's definition as a problem, focusing events are rather inapplicable concerning the nature of higher education as a policy area.

The social dimension is defined as a problem in the Bologna Process context firstly by the ESU. The ESU defined access inequalities and insufficient studying and living conditions of students as problems. The ESU, as a student representative organisation, advocates ensuring equal access to higher education (especially through ensuring tuition free education) and improving student wellbeing. In this sense, its problem definition reflects the very essential arguments, values and principles defended and claimed by all student unions. The ESU categorises higher education as a human right which cannot be tradable and higher education as a public good. The ESU informs its problem definition from its member student unions in 38 countries and their survey results. The inclusion of higher education in the GATS negotiations triggered the ESU reaction. Before 2001, the ESU was the only international stakeholder clearly advocating the social dimension.

7.4.2.2. The Policy Stream

The policy stream comprises policy ideas, alternatives, policy communities and their activities. In this research, the policy communities are limited to the members and consultative members of the Bologna Process. In the policy stream, policy communities try to spread their ideas through persuasion. Regular meetings provide them the venues to

conduct their "softening up" activities. The ministers of the Bologna Process countries meet every two years to evaluate the implementations of the past two years, as well as to discuss the challenges and activities of the coming years. The BFUG meets every 6 months and the Board meets before these meetings. Apart from these, policy communities meet in different Bologna events, e.g., working group meetings and seminars. The Bologna Secretariat sustains daily communication possibilities among the policy communities. Each policy actor brings its own priority issues to the primeval soup of the Bologna Process. This can be seen in the accumulative development of the Bologna Process, as well as of the social dimension. The number of elements associated with the social dimension and their scope became larger and wider in time. Policy entrepreneurs are essential for the survival and success of these proposals. There are various policy entrepreneurs in the Bologna Process depending on the issue at stake. For the social dimension, the ESU has been the key policy entrepreneur advocating certain solution alternatives and working hard to soften up the environment for it so that it can grow into a policy proposal. This is proved in Chapter 4 through the identification of the "important actors"[93] for the social dimension. As a result, the most "important" actor for the social dimension is identified as the ESU. The other important actors are the EC, the Council of Europe, the EUA and the EURASHE.

7.4.2.3. The Political Stream

The political stream is composed of all political factors, i.e., national mood, organised political forces and turnover and jurisdiction. The dominant trends in the political environment are considered as the national mood. During the last decades, the political environment is dominated more and more with the ideas of less direct central control, more steering and the rise of evaluative state claims which bring along decreasing public funding for higher education, increasing claims for the diversification of funding resources and more accountability (cf. Huisman *et al*. 2009: xiii). In addition to these, there is an increasing emphasis on the employability of graduates, enhancing knowledge economies and increasing competitiveness (cf. Kivinen *et al*. 2007: 232). Unlike in the 1960s and the 1970s, participative equity does not have a central position in this picture. This situation illustrates the "mood" for higher education policies. In this sense, it is expectable that political actors opt for decisions which would promote quality assurance and employability rather than participative equity. Despite this "mood", the political environment is not completely hostile to the social dimension. Increasing and widening participation in higher education have traditionally been defined by many national governments as issues to be acted on. Furthermore, increasing the number of higher education graduates is considered essential to enhance knowledge economies. In this sense, there is a certain level of political perceptivity.

The multiple streams framework also defines the events within the government as an important part of the political stream. One of these events is turnover which can be through the change of the political actors or their preferences. Actor preferences can change depending on the issues they are interested in. In the Bologna Process, it is possible to come across with a new cast of actors every two years. The participating ministers can change due to national elections or other national dynamics; in a similar way, the representatives coming from stakeholder organisations can change due their institutional or personal conditions. The

[93] To remind, the actors who focused their attention on the social dimension are identified by looking at the role, priority areas and activities (i.e., organising/taking part in the official Bologna Process seminars, workshops, reports and research projects) of them in 1999-2010. The list of activities and details of analyses are provided in "The Definition of the Social Dimension by Actors".

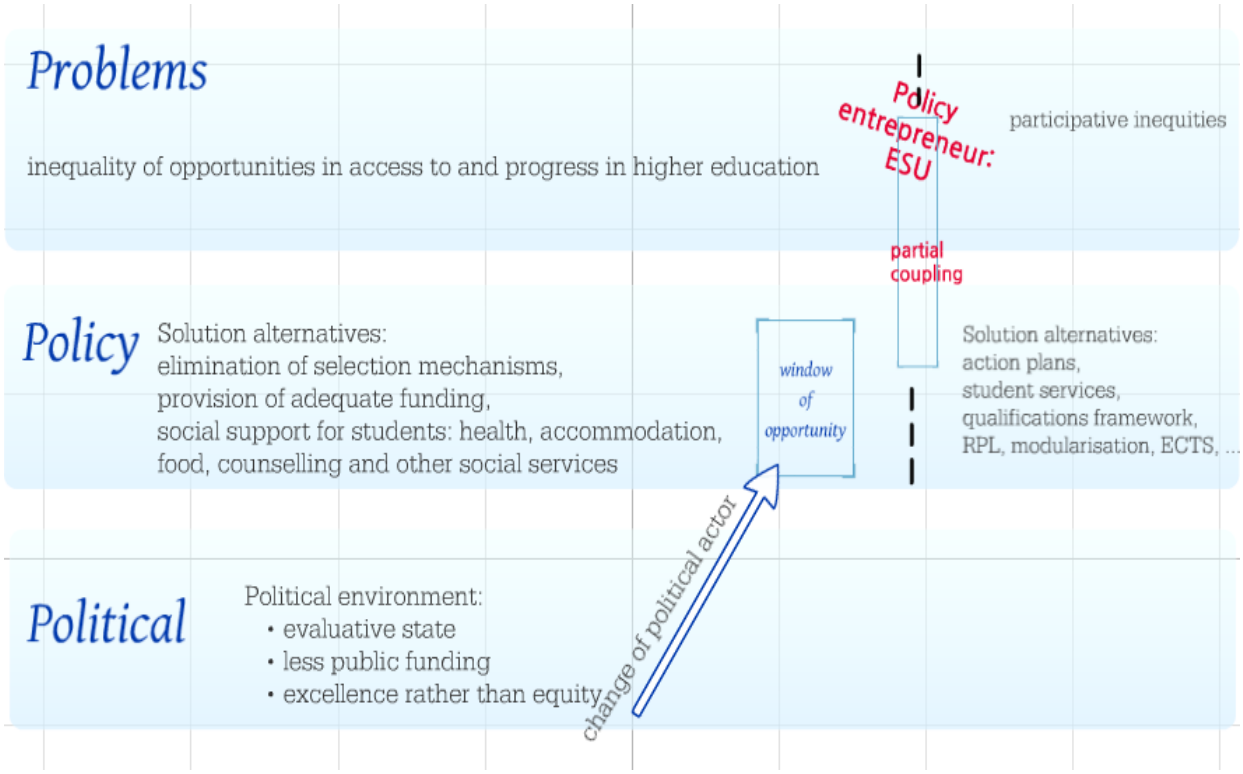
latter situation would have a minor impact considering that the stakeholders would keep their institutional stances; while the change of ministers, if it came with a change of the ruling party, can bring bigger changes.

7.4.2.4. The Window of Opportunity

As mentioned above, a window of opportunity opens as a result of a change in the problems stream (i.e., appearance of a pressing problem) or the political stream (i.e., change in political actors or of national mood). For the social dimension, it was the latter one. In 1999, 29 ministers responsible for higher education, the EC, the EUA and the Council of Europe were present when the Bologna Declaration was signed. The ESU as students' representative organisation was invited as an observer to the Prague ministerial meeting in 2001 and afterwards became a consultative member. This happened as a result of the pressing and persistent engagement of the ESU with the Bologna Process (e.g., preparing policy papers and declarations), its lobbying activities and other policy actors' acknowledgement that it is necessary to have the support of students for the series of reforms suggested by the Bologna Process to be successful. This support can also be read as a move to reduce the threat of big student demonstrations by including the students in the process.

This change in the political stream opened a window of opportunity for the social dimension. When there is an open window, the policy entrepreneurs have the opportunity to couple all streams and to try to enhance the agenda status of an item. A successful coupling requires the recognition of a problem matching with a solution and convenient political environment for change; in other words, elements from all streams should join in. A window of opportunity stays open for a short time and policy entrepreneurs should act quickly to make the coupling. The ESU acted quickly to push the social dimension into the Bologna Process agenda. In 2001, the ESU defined inequalities in access to higher education (ESU 2001a) and insufficient living and study conditions of students (ESU 2001b) as the main problems of the social dimension. When pushing the social dimension in, the ESU also defined solution alternatives, i.e., the elimination of selection mechanisms (especially of tuition fees) based on anything other than acquired knowledge, the provision of adequate funding in the form of grants and social support for students that covers health, accommodation, food, counselling and other social services. However, these efforts did not lead to a full coupling. The Prague Declaration (2001) includes neither this problem definition nor these solution alternatives. The ministers called for the exploration of the social dimension through international seminars. This means that the social dimension was pushed into the agenda by a skilful policy entrepreneur with a problem definition and a solution alternative attached to it; however, the solution alternatives suggested by the ESU were not worked out sufficiently, it did not gain sufficient support of the policy actors of the Bologna Process. One of the reasons for a policy window to close is the lack of a viable alternative at hand at the time of an open window (Kingdon 2003: 170). This happened to the social dimension, the ESU was pushing the social dimension in when itself was becoming an influential actor of the Bologna Process. In this sense, it did not have enough time to soften up the environment. Still, this window of opportunity gave a place to the social dimension in the decision agenda of the Bologna Process.

Figure 7.2 The Social Dimension through the Multiple Streams Framework



Source: own work

7.4.3. The Social Dimension after the Window

After pushing the social dimension into the decision agenda of the Bologna Process, the ESU continued to advocate the social dimension as its priority issue. This has led to the rise of the social dimension as an agenda item in the following years.

7.4.3.1. The Changing Problem Definition of the Social Dimension

The multiple streams framework suggests that when there is an issue rising in the agenda, not only the relevant policy entrepreneur but also other interest groups react to ensure that their interests are protected in the policy to appear, if it ever appears (Kingdon 2003: 50). This impulse can be one reason of the increasing interest of other actors for the social dimension. Another reason is the continuous and dedicated softening up activities of the ESU for the social dimension after 2001. In its various declarations (2001-2007) addressed to the ministerial meetings and the regular "Bologna With Students' Eyes" reports (2003-2009), the ESU continued to define inequalities in access to higher education and chances to complete studies as problems needing attention.

In addition to the ESU, the Council of Europe provided a problem definition for the social dimension, after its appearance in the Bologna Process agenda. The Council of Europe has its focus of attention on access inequalities. It has also defined higher education as a public good. This categorisation complies with the European Convention on Human Rights which is observed by the Council of Europe. In addition to this, the Council focuses on achieving social cohesion as one of its action areas. In these respects, it supported the social dimension as an agenda item. As explained in the public good and responsibility section of Chapter 4, this definition did not remain as a feature of the social dimension continuously.

The EUA, the EURASHE, the EI and the EC also considered low participation rates in higher education problematic. In this sense, they supported increasing and widening access from

underrepresented groups. In defining this problem, the EUA mentioned the importance of student satisfaction and free access. These issues are considered problematic for the EUA due to its concerns for increasing the competitiveness and excellence of universities and institutional autonomy. In the analysed EUA documents, the social dimension is mostly categorised in other action areas, e.g., degree structures (Trends IV), lifelong learning and quality assurance (Trends V and Trends 2010 Reports). As argued by the multiple streams framework, the categorisation of the social dimension problems under other action areas rather than on its own causes ambiguity in the problem definition. The EI in principle showed its support for the social dimension; however, its problem definition focuses on the commodification of higher education (i.e., the inclusion of higher education in GATS) which has not received high attention in the Bologna Process context. The EI's support to the students' arguments for free access (with respect to tuition fees) to higher education remained at a principle level. The EC started to pay attention to the social dimension later than the others (2007). It advocates increasing and widening access to higher education in order to ensure the sustainable supply of highly qualified labour force for the economy. The EC also mentions high dropout rates as a problem due to causing inefficiency (one of the principles the EC strongly emphasised). Its problem definition in this sense focuses on the economy and economic growth.

With other actors' rising attention to the social dimension, the definition of the problem has become more encompassing as well as blurred. Each actor attached different elements to it depending on their own institutional priorities, values and interests. A Bologna Process level action was also taken to define the social dimension. The multiple streams framework defines indicators and feedback as mechanisms translating conditions to problems. After entering into the agenda, the relevant indicators for the social dimension also started to develop at the Bologna Process level. Since 2001-2003 follow-up period, there has been a call for collection of data on the social dimension issues and in 2007, the ministers assigned the EUROStudent to develop indicators and to collect data on the socio-economic background and living and studying conditions of students. As for feedback, the BFUG receives information from its working group reports and regular reports. In 2005, the BFUG formed a working group on the Social Dimension and Data on the Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries[94] (BFUG-WG) to explore the social dimension. The problem definition provided by this group was included in the London Communiqué (2007). Accordingly, inequity in the reflection of population's diversity in the student body accessing to, progressing in and completing higher education is defined as a problem. The group also prepared a template to be added to the stocktaking report. The social dimension became part of the stocktaking exercise only once in 2009.

7.4.3.2. Solution Alternatives

As each actor brings its own proposals, a myriad of alternatives are floating in the primeval soup of the Bologna Process. The ESU brought along its solution alternatives together with the problems that it defined in relation to the social dimension. It has consistently advocated measures for equal access opportunities to quality education for all (e.g., quality pre-higher education, non-discriminatory admission mechanisms) and the promotion of living and study conditions for students through financial aid (grants and tuition free education) and other student services, e.g., accommodation, food and health services and academic and

[94] This group is composed of the ESU, the EUA, the EI, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Russia, Sweden (chair) and the United Kingdom.

career counselling. The ESU has not remained as the only actor promoting solution alternatives. The Council of Europe advocated higher education as a public responsibility until 2004. It was formulated as the operationalisation of the higher education as a public good understanding. After 2004, it promoted the qualifications frameworks focusing on learning outcomes and the Lisbon Recognition Convention as means to improve access conditions. The EUA mentioned admission mechanisms and funding structures as means to increase access. To wit, the EUA advocates the provision of more autonomy to universities in selecting students by arguing that centrally set admission requirements are insensitive to the special conditions of underrepresented groups and limit the universities discretionary powers to take relevant actions. The EUA also advocates increasing funding for universities in order to ensure the provision of a good study environment for students which would improve their study experiences. The EURASHE advocates increasing funding for higher education institutions in the non-university sector, claiming their superior position in attracting people from underrepresented groups. In addition to this, all actors favour taking structural measures to increase the flexibility of the system, and named measures such as the recognition of prior learning, curricular reform, the use of the ECTS, etc. The other actors did not suggest a solution alternative.

At Bologna Process level, in 2003, participants of an international Bologna seminar suggested the development of a "social student policy" which has common goals rather than measures and be monitored by the ECStA (cf. Neetens 2003). In 2005, an action was taken to develop a common alternative and the BFUG-WG was assigned to the task. On the one hand, this action was in line with the suggestion of the seminar participants; on the other hand, it has a wider scope of developing solutions for participative inequities, unlike the previous suggestion focusing on student services. In its report (2007), the BFUG-WG proposes that it is not possible to come with a European level solution to the problem of participative inequity due to the historical and social differences among the countries. Each country is urged to develop a national action plan and a strategy to solve this problem. This suggestion is directly included in the next ministerial communiqué (2007). The countries are asked to annex their plans in their 2007-2009 national reports for the Bologna Process.

As there is competition among the proposals, available alternatives need to be viable with respect to the technical details of implementation, value acceptability within the policy community, tolerable cost , anticipated public acceptance and receptivity among policy elected decision makers (Kingdon 2003: 124). Solution proposals in the Bologna Process context do not provide details of implementation; details are expected to be specified at the national level. While the development of generic guidelines was the proposal, especially of the ESU, until 2007, the above mentioned proposal of the BFUG-WG closed this way. It stopped the development of an implementable proposal at the Bologna level by defining it too loosely or declaring the impossibility of it. The obstacle created by this proposal becomes even clearer when the progression of the Bologna Process in other action areas is considered, i.e., for the development of national quality assurance systems or the change of degree structures, the countries are provided with general frameworks of action and generic guidelines and expected to define implementation details at the national level.

Compatibility with the values of specialists is rather difficult to achieve in the Bologna context, especially considering the prominent role of interest groups. In relation to the values of policy specialists, the multiple streams framework suggests the role of ideologies and specifically the principles of equity and efficiency. Kingdon suggests that while the principle

of equity is not an agenda driver, it can sometimes strengthen the arguments or proposals by redressing the inequalities. This suggestion of the framework conforms to the argument raised by Teichler (personal conversation 2010) "the social dimension as a fig leaf of the Bologna Process". The existence of the social dimension in the Bologna Process agenda as an unimplementable item can be considered to serve redressing purposes. Concerning efficiency, the framework argues that instead of the actual cost of a proposal, the expected benefits of that proposal are a matter of concern for policy makers. In line with this statement, the common argument against any possible measure to increase participative equity is its being too costly. However, none of the actors is providing possible figures of the expected cost. This indicates, as suggested by the multiple streams framework, that the low level of expected benefits from *any* expenditure to be made in this direction is a big constraint. Therefore, the tolerable cost of a proposal is not even a matter of discussion for the social dimension. Since the massification of higher education, there is almost no need to discuss that inclusive higher education is very costly and anything social by definition means more public funding. This situation also lowers the chances for receptivity among elected decision makers.

There are two often cited concerns in the development of a possible social dimension policy proposal: dependency on other policy domains beyond higher education and national contexts. Firstly, the solution of participative inequities is stated to depend on other policy domains, e.g. education and training policies at all levels, "employment, the economy, social inclusion, youth, health, justice, housing and social services" (EC 2006: 4). The ESU (2010: 122) touches upon the same point:

> "Many Bologna goals—for example mobility, social dimension and lifelong learning—can only be achieved by combining the work of the national ministries for education, with that of the ministries for social affairs, economic affairs and foreign affairs, as well as institutions, students, staff, and other stakeholders."

The complementation of the social dimension policies in other levels of the education system is mentioned in the 2009 General Report and the 2009 Stocktaking Report (Bologna Secretariat 2009:9, Rauhvargers *et al.* 2009: 139). The Leuven Communiqué (2009) and the Budapest-Vienna Declaration (2010) affirm it as the "complementation of actions in other parts of the educational system" in achieving equity in higher education. This argument, while reflecting the reality, has the risk of being an excuse not to take action on the social dimension of the Bologna Process.

Another argument is the high dependency of underrepresentation on the national contexts. Considering the fact that higher education system is by definition national, it is impossible to expect any independency from it in any action to be taken. This approach could only lead to total abolishment of the Bologna Process or can only be an ignorance of the changes that have been happening in the Bologna Process higher education systems. Indeed, similar problems faced by the social dimension are valid also for the other action areas.

7.4.3.3. The Political Environment

The political environment has not changed so much since the appearance of the social dimension. Only, the recent financial crisis is added to the picture. During the financial crisis, the ministers mentioned the necessity to support higher education institutions as part of the public responsibility of the state. However, this statement has not reached the social dimension. To the contrary, the crisis provides another reason for further budget constraints and strengthens the existing political climate. Another element is the changing priorities of

actors. In 2001, the ESU clearly had the strongest emphasis on the social dimension. However, in years, while continuing to advocate the social dimension, it has been involved in many other action areas, e.g., quality assurance through the E4 Group. This means the division of this actor's available resources and hence less attention and effort for the social dimension. In a similar way, after 2004, the Council of Europe mainly focused its attention on the promotion of recognition tools. The political perceptivity for increasing participative equity has not changed so much in these years.

7.4.3.4. Waiting for the New Window of Opportunity

Since 2001 the ESU has promoted the social dimension through conferences, various workshops and reports in every possible venue of the Bologna Process. In various declarations it has called the ministers to define the social dimension as a priority area, to include it in the stocktaking process and to take action for the development of relevant indicators showing the socio-economic conditions of students. These softening-up activities together with the growing interest of other actors resulted in action. The official Bologna Process seminars focused on the issue almost continuously since 2001. In the Bergen Communiqué (2005), the social dimension finally became a separate title with certain issues linked to it. The ministers defined inequalities in access and progress as problems and suggested to increase permeability of the system, to provide more variety in study options and financial help as well as guidance and counselling by paying special attention to underrepresented groups to ensure access, progress and completion. Furthermore, the BFUG formed three different working groups that informed the ministerial meetings on the social dimension in 2005-2010.

The multiple streams framework underlines the importance of problem definition for the rise of a policy issue. The problem definition at the Bologna level suffered the lack of data and feedback. The EUROStudent survey is supposedly, the main source of information based on the indicators on the socio-economic conditions of students. However, the survey so far has been suffering from the difficulties of international data collection and could not inform policy making at the European level comprehensively. The lack of data has been discussed in detail in Chapter 4.1. Another challenge in data collection is stated in the multiple streams framework as the tendency to value quantitative indicators more. This situation makes "soft" problems or policy areas less favourable. For instance, the use of indicators demonstrating the rates of private return of higher education against public return to justify tuition fees is difficult to fight against for the advocates of participative equity, since it is not possible to fully measure public return rates. In addition to this, collecting data on certain underrepresented groups (e.g., ethnic or linguistic minorities, people with disabilities, etc.) is often found problematic on ethic grounds. Furthermore, there is no statistical information concerning the completion of studies. Systematic monitoring and regular data collection is the biggest missing part for a better problem definition of the social dimension. Neither at the European nor at the national level there is complete and comparable data on the underrepresented groups' reflection in higher education. The most related available indicator is enrolment rates which can only explain participation by age and gender. Concerning feedback, the stocktaking reports is the main channel. The social dimension is included once as a special chapter in the stocktaking report and prepared by the Social Dimension Coordination Group, while the rest of the report is prepared by the Stocktaking Working Group. As discussed in 4.1.6, the way the social dimension was included in the stocktaking

exercise was not allowing benchmarking[95] which has so far been the main sanction mechanism in the Bologna Process context. Together with the low response rate of the countries, the results of the exercise are not able to inform or improve the problem definition of the social dimension. While acknowledging the lack of data as an obstacle, the ESU's criticism shall also be mentioned. The ESU argues that the lack of data is used as an excuse not to take action. While acknowledging the essentiality of research on the issue, the ESU argues that available information suggests "a strong correlation between the socio-economic background of students and the paths they will choose in their educational career" (ESU 2006: 2). Many documents also provide a list of underrepresented groups which commonly include people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic and linguistic minorities or immigrant backgrounds, people with disabilities, people from distant areas and people from non-traditional educational pathways. The identification of these groups is necessary in order to be able to see obstacles and produce policies to remove them and this information is already available.

A second important factor is availability of a viable alternative. In the agenda setting stage, the rise of an issue in the agenda highly depends on the attention paid to it by policy actors. As argued by the multiple streams framework, this attention can shift when policy actors somehow react to an issue, i.e., come up with a solution proposal without seeing whether this proposal would solve the problem or not. In this sense, the proposal of the BFUG-WG has a special importance. The BFUG-WG suggested that each country should prepare a strategic and national action plan to address social dimension issues in the 2007-2009 period. Then, each country was supposed to be monitored in the future based on the national strategy plan it prepared. This proposal was considered more appropriate compare to preparing a generic action framework. Such a framework is considered so complex and difficult to prepare for the social dimension due to national differences. Only 27 countries filled in the social dimension section of the national reports for the Bologna Process 2007-2009. Out of these 27, 22 countries filled in the section on the action plans; however mostly with existing policies which have varying degrees of relevance to the social dimension. In the end, the proposal could not facilitate the development of an implementable suggestion. There has not been a monitoring process developed based on this suggestion. Furthermore, it blocked the way for developing a generic guideline for all Bologna Process countries, unlike other Bologna Process action areas[96]. This proposal was however enough to distract the attention from the social dimension. The policy makers shifted their attention without waiting to see that this solution proposal indeed did not trigger an action.

A third factor, besides problem definition and alternative specification, is the competition with other issues. As mentioned before, being in the decision agenda does not promise an enactment. There are many issues of equal competence (i.e., with a solution and a problem attached to it) in the BFUG agenda which compete to gain more attention. The Bologna Process introduced a wide scope of reforms covering quality assurance systems, curricula,

[95] While correctness of this method would be a matter of another discussion the reform areas measured with this report have had much faster progress, e.g. degree structure, quality assurance reforms.

[96] The national differences exist in all aspects of higher education systems and the Bologna Process managed to recommend guidelines for development of common structures in degree structures and quality assurance areas. It shall be reminded that at this point, the concern is the development of such policy tools rather than evaluation of implementations and emerging differences at this stage.

student and staff mobility, etc., which required the capacities of the national systems to enact necessary and sufficient decisions. In this competition, the social dimension as a soft issue is disadvantageous. Since the beginning of the process, structural reform areas have been priority items of the agenda as well as of the implementation. These reforms have the advantage of being easier to observe, at least in their initial phases (e.g., the change of degree structures, the adoption of the ECTS, etc.).

A fourth factor is the strategic constraints of actors. Each actor has limited political resources which they would like to invest in the items with high priority (Kingdon 2003: 184). In a similar way, actors' changing priority areas can be considered. The policy entrepreneurs of the social dimension have other priorities in the Bologna Process context in addition to the social dimension, which constrains their investment in the social dimension. This can be seen in the shift of focus to for the ESU and the Council of Europe. As the presence of a skilful entrepreneur ameliorates the agenda status, its absence deteriorates it. Moreover, there are logical constraints on agenda items to be processed. The focus on increasing efficiency (i.e., less cost-more output) and excellence logically excludes ensuring the availability of financial resources for disadvantaged groups (i.e., higher costs) or even developments.

Fifthly, the social dimension is pushed into the agenda by an interest group organisation, the ESU, rather than the ministers. According to the multiple streams framework, the chances of a subject rising "on the governmental agenda are enhanced if that subject is pushed by participants in the visible cluster [president, political appointees, the mass media], and dampened if it is neglected by those participants" (Kingdon 2003: 199). The ESU has been the only actor paying continuous attention to the social dimension. The participants of the "Social Dimension of the EHEA and World-wide Competition" seminar also refer to this point when they suggested that it is necessary to take a political approach in order to promote the social dimension (Statsna 2005: 4). The multi-level governance structure of the Bologna Process adds a further constraint. The items are transferred to the national settings through ministerial representatives and other national Bologna Process actors. This transition is an interpretation process as well. It gives national actors the opportunity to attach further issues or omit some of the issues depending on their understanding and priorities. This means a possible replication of the above mentioned constraints at the national level. While the package should have elements of the three streams to have a high chance of becoming an authoritative decision, there is also partial coupling in which a pet proposal is linked to an element in the problems or political stream. Advocates, after achieving a partial coupling, try to complete it. The social dimension exists in the Bologna Process agenda as a result of partial coupling. The problems of inequities in access to, progress in and completion of higher education studies are attached to some solution alternatives. However, it is not possible to see a worked out proposal addressing the participative inequity problem that is agreed by all actors.

7.5. Conclusion

The chapter looks at the social dimension of the Bologna Process through the multiple streams framework's lenses. Accordingly, the problems of participative inequity, solution alternatives and a certain level of political perceptivity have existed already independent of each other. In 2001, the ESU seized the window of opportunity to push the social dimension into the Bologna Process agenda. In the Bologna Process agenda, a myriad of issues compete for a higher status. In this competition, the ESU's softening-up activities to promote the

social dimension has improved the agenda status of the social dimension. However, until 2007, the social dimension was not defined as a priority area by the ministers. The low agenda status of the social dimension can be explained with respect to the obstacles in problem definition, the strategic constraints of the policy advocates in investing their efforts and budget constraints.

As argued by the multiple streams framework, the real intentions of the actors reveal themselves in their proposals. A proposal can aim at solving a problem or can be a pet proposal. The analysis shows that the proposals of the international stakeholders primarily target at protecting their institutional interests. Similar patterns can be observed in the problem definition. Actors define a problem or show attention to an issue depending on their perceptions, priorities, values and interests within their institutional context. This situation is rather obvious in the context of this research, since the interest group organisations, i.e., international stakeholders create the main group of actors.

The opening of a window of opportunity for the social dimension pushed it into the Bologna Process agenda. However, it was not enough for the social dimension to grow into an authoritative decision. Nevertheless, the softening-up of the environment continues. Since the appearance of the social dimension in 2001, the number of actors involved in relevant activities, in other words focusing their attention on the social dimension, has increased substantially. In addition to this, the content of activities has shifted from ways of defining the social dimension to ways of operationalisation. This indicates that the chances of the social dimension to become a proper policy that can be implemented continue when the time comes for it; in other words, when the next window of opportunity opens.

8. Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the social dimension of the Bologna Process and its reflections in Finland, Germany and Turkey. This study was prompted by the ambiguous situation of the social dimension of the Bologna Process. Although the social dimension was included in the process in 2001, it was not possible to observe reforms in this area, unlike other areas of the Bologna Process, in the benchmark year of 2010. The research aimed at explaining this situation of the social dimension. In order to explore and analyse the social dimension, the research asked the following questions:

1. What does the social dimension of the Bologna Process mean according to the Bologna Process actors? What are the different understandings and how do they differ?
2. What is the relationship of the social dimension with the rest of the Bologna Process?
3. Does the social dimension of the Bologna Process reflect on the national level Bologna Process policies in Finland, Germany and Turkey? How?
4. What is the explanation of social dimension's existence in the Bologna Process agenda?

In answering these questions; Chapter 3 mapped the Bologna Process to contextualise the social dimension. This chapter provided the dissertation with the main features of the Bologna Process without claiming an exhaustive analysis of it. The Bologna Process issues are presented in terms of its main themes, as internationalisation, learning related issues and quality; operational areas as mobility, degree structures, lifelong learning, the social dimension and quality assurance. The social dimension falls under the issues related to learning, although it is not possible to make very clear-cut separations among the issues of the Bologna Process.

Chapter 4 showed the development of the social dimension by looking at its role, status and follow-up and defined it through its strategic goals, operational goals and means. In addition to this, the chapter analysed the relations of the social dimension with the other areas of the process. In the analysis, each actor's interpretation of the social dimension is discussed separately.

Chapter 5 provided an overview of scholarly discussions on the core themes of the social dimension, i.e., equality, equality of opportunities in access to higher education and the expansion of higher education. This chapter provided further information on the empirically constructed elements of the dissertation.

Chapter 6 looked at the reflection of the social dimension on national Bologna agendas through the cases of Finland, Germany and Turkey. The country case studies showed the level of awareness of the social dimension of the Bologna Process and the actions taken in that regard. The structural elements of higher education systems and participation policies since World War II provided background information on the higher education system of these countries.

Chapter 7 provided *an* interpretation of the social dimension through the lenses of the multiple streams framework. It explained the emergence of the social dimension as a policy item that could not go beyond the agenda setting stage.

8.1. The Research Questions Revisited

Research Question 1: What does the social dimension of the Bologna Process mean according to the Bologna Process actors? Are there different understandings and if so, how do they differ?

1.1 What is the status, role and monitoring of the social dimension in the Bologna Process?
1.2 What are the strategic goals of the social dimension?
1.3 What are the operational goals of the social dimension?
1.4 What are the means of these goals of the social dimension?

The social dimension has evolved in time and became a constituent element of the Bologna Process from an element to be explored. In this evolvement, it has been interpreted basically in two ways: i. an overarching action line, a transversal policy area and ii. a principle of the Bologna Process, a policy idea. While the first interpretation tried to attribute certain means targeting at implementations related to the social dimension, the second interpretation preferred to keep it as a principle to be confirmed when necessary. The social dimension has been assigned different roles in time. First, it was mentioned with a balancer role (i.e., balancing the economic emphasis through emphasising the social characteristics of higher education) then a supporter role (i.e., enhancing economic growth) in the EHEA. After 2007, this balancer-supporter role received a new interpretation. The social aspect came to be defined as each individual's right to develop her-/himself and the economic aspect as ensuring higher number of highly qualified workforce and a continuous update of their skills. The follow-up structures (i.e., data collection and monitoring) of the social dimension are explanatory for its definition and development. The need for data collection has been mentioned since 2003 continuously by all actors and there has been some progress in this respect, e.g. the EUROStudent survey, the inclusion in international seminars and the stocktaking report. However, these incentives could not develop into a systematic and continuous monitoring. The calls for more comprehensive data collection on the social dimension continue. The insufficiency of follow-up structures for the social dimension denotes both the ambiguity of its definition and the low level of importance given to it.

The strategic goals, operational goals and means of the social dimension have changed in time, too. Different elements have been included, renamed and excluded from its goals and means. Another dimension of change is by actors. Each actor has had an interpretation of the social dimension, as well. Concerning the different understandings on the social dimension, the descending level of abstraction reduces the commonalities. The strategic goal of the social dimension, as it became clear after 2007 as ensuring the reflection of diversity of the population on the student body is agreed on by all actors. In line with it, there is an agreement on the operational goals of ensuring equal access, successful progression and completion of higher education studies for all, with a special emphasis on underrepresented groups. Even though these three operational goals are mentioned commonly, the emphasis has been on widening and increasing access and ensuring the progression of studies. The successful completion of studies is implicitly expected to obtain as a result of the previous two phases. For instance, there is not any reference to increasing retention by the ministers. Reducing dropout is mentioned only by some of the stakeholders, i.e., by the EC as a necessity for increasing efficiency and by the ESU as a sign of student wellbeing. The surface commonality in the perception of goals diminishes when the means to achieve these goals are analysed. The marker of it is underrepresented groups. The actors' definition of means

differs in this essential aspect of the social dimension. While the ministerial documents do not place a special emphasis on a certain underrepresented group, the ESU mostly mentions all underrepresented groups, the EC and the EUA mostly focus on non-traditional students, i.e., students coming from non-traditional educational routes and mature students. This differentiation causes clear differences of understandings on the perception of means in relation to the social dimension. Indeed, the lack of a common set of means to be translated into the national policy making processes shows that it is not possible to observe a common understanding of the social dimension means. The means that are primarily defined within the other action areas are expected to contribute to achieving the social dimension goals. This situation can become problematic concerning underrepresented groups. A better inclusion of underrepresented groups in higher education often requires further measures than the ones offered for the general student body.

The means of the social dimension are grouped under admission mechanisms, flexible learning paths and student services by looking at the documents produced at the Bologna Process level. Concerning admission, there is an agreement on the importance of transparent, non-discriminatory admission regulations in access to higher education as the basic requirement. In addition to this, actors commonly mentioned the need for the recognition of prior learning, to widen access to non-traditional groups and the use of qualifications frameworks in this sense. In addition to these, the ESU and the EUA mention admission criteria. While the ESU objects to the application of any filter, the EUA mentions the importance of institutional autonomy in such processes. The other commonly mentioned group is the flexibility of learning paths. This group includes the two cycle degree structure, curriculum reform and modularisation, part-time studies, the use of ECTS which is defined based on student workload and learning outcomes and short cycle. These measures, even though named as flexible learning paths in the Bologna Process context, are indeed dealing with the provision of studies in various modes and types in higher education. The variety in study provisions and conditions are expected to increase flexibility which is expected to increase inclusiveness. Concerning the student services, most of the actors mention guidance and counselling services and services for daily life, such as accommodation, food and health services. Another often mentioned student service is financial aid. The ministers mention the provision of financial aid to ensure a healthy study period for students and to overcome obstacles due to economic disadvantages and do not mention further details on this matter. Stakeholders mention different types of financial aid to support students, such as loans, grants and subsidies. There are different views about the combination of these forms, i.e., loan-based *versus* grant-based aid. Another point of differing views is on tuition fees. While ministers do not include them in the discussion, stakeholders' views vary from for tuition fees (the EC), to acceptance of possible applications (the EUA) and to a stand against tuition fees (the ESU and the EI).

Answering the first research question also revealed additional elements. Higher education as a public good and public responsibility and the involvement of students in higher education governance appeared as "surrounding issues" of the social dimension. These issues entered into the Bologna Process at the same time with the social dimension by the hands of students. These issues are sometimes interpreted as part of the social dimension and sometimes as a separate element depending on the actor. This research concludes that these issues are indeed go beyond the social dimension and relate to the whole Bologna Process, as principles and with regard to its governance.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship of the social dimension with the rest of the Bologna Process?

2.1 Is there a relationship at all?
2.2 Are there common or conflicting elements between the social dimension and the other action areas of the Bologna Process?

The analysis shows that the balancer-supporter role of the social dimension is one of the strong links of it to the Bologna Process. The social dimension is expected to balance and, at the same time, to enhance the economic emphasis on higher education with a social emphasis. When functions both as a balancer and supporter, the social dimension is expected to contribute to the competitiveness of the EHEA. This situation contributed to the ambiguity of the social dimension and creates a paradoxical aspect of it. The economic emphasis demands highly competitive, elite higher education institutions. This trend can be related to the differentiation of higher education institutions, especially vertical differentiation. On the one hand, the competitiveness goal of the Bologna Process implicitly enforces a vertical differentiation, which would require more elite institutions for the elite groups of the societies. On the other hand, the social dimension sets off with the strategic goal of ensuring access, progress and completion of studies. Accordingly, the social dimension would ensure better study conditions which would ensure successful completion of studies which would support the competitiveness of the EHEA. Indeed, this equation adds up as it is, but the introduction of the participative equity goal would unbalance it.

Concerning the relations between the other action areas and the social dimension, confusion can be observed in most of the cases. In the beginning of its development, the social dimension was vaguely defined and mostly mentioned under other action areas, i.e., mobility, degree structures and lifelong learning. For mobility, the social dimension is considered as social aspect for the improvement of mobility, such as ensuring access to mobility programmes for all groups of students or ensuring support for students in cases of legal and financial obstacles. This aspect is considered as a strong link between these two action areas. For the degree structures, it was very briefly interpreted in relation to ensuring access to the next cycle. The social dimension's emphasis has focused on the access to the first cycle. Lifelong learning and the social dimension are the most confused action areas. They have the common goals of enhancing social cohesion and maximising capacities through widening participation and equal access. This dissertation differentiates them based on their different interpretations of underrepresented groups. While lifelong learning focuses only on people coming from non-traditional educational paths and adult learners, the social dimension has a wider definition of underrepresented groups. Conflict rather than confusion is defining the relationship between the social dimension and quality assurance. All actors' statements against the traditional tension of quantity *versus* quality can be interpreted as an indicator of a concern on this tension. According to some, the tension can be reduced with the help of quality assurance mechanisms or by revising quality assurance criteria. According to some (e.g., the ESU) quality assurance and the social dimension naturally support each other towards the goal of enhancing quality. The lack of action on the social dimension area has prevented the raise of a conflict so far.

Research Question 3: Does the social dimension of the Bologna Process reflect on the national level Bologna Process policies in Finland, Germany and Turkey?

3.1. Are the main Bologna Process actors of these countries aware of the social dimension? If so, what are their understandings?
3.2. Are above mentioned policy goals and means of the social dimension of the Bologna Process observable in the relevant national policies?
3.3. Have these policies changed since 2001? If yes, have these changes happened due to the social dimension of the Bologna Process?

Documents and interviews illustrate that the social dimension of the Bologna Process is known to the national Bologna Process actors of the selected countries. In this awareness, the role of the student unions shall be highlighted. The active and effective involvement of student unions makes a considerable difference on the development of the social dimension issues. While in Finland student unions have had an active and strong role in the development of relevant policies, in Germany, the role of the student unions at the federal level is rather limited due to the fragmented structure. In Turkey, the student unions are established as a Bologna reform and are still in the early stages of their development. In this sense, they are not in the position to raise awareness of the social dimension.

The national Bologna actors in the selected countries had different understandings of the social dimension in the beginning (2001) and this understanding became similar after 2007 with the explicit definition of the participative equity goal in the London Communiqué. The social dimension is mostly understood in relation to increasing access and student services. The completion of studies is not observable in the national actors' social dimension understandings. It shall be noted that in Finland and Germany, shortening study periods is a policy concern which is related to the degree structures.

In Finland and Germany, the participative equity and ensuring equality of opportunities in access to higher education have traditionally been policy concerns. There has also been awareness on the underrepresented groups and their special needs. In Turkey, it is not possible to observe the social dimension goals as policy drivers. The policies are mostly made to address the excess demand. Beyond that ensuring equal access has not been a policy driver and underrepresentation in participation in higher education is not officially acknowledged.

In Finland and Germany, since the 1950s a variety of policies are employed to increase participation in higher education by paying attention to underrepresented groups. The regionalisation of higher education, increasing the number of study places, the creation of the non-university sector and tuition free higher education are commonly employed policies, which are not defined in the social dimension context. In Turkey, the efforts have focused on expanding the size of the system starting in the end of 1970s.

Concerning the social dimension means, all selected countries already had anti-discriminatory legislations. They made changes in order to improve the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (Finland and Germany) as a lifelong learning action. The countries also made other structural changes, such as the adoption of the two cycle degree structure (Finland and Germany, in Turkey it was already in use), the use of ECTS (all countries) in varying degrees and the development of national qualifications frameworks (all countries). These changes mostly targeted at facilitating mobility and increasing the comparability and transparency of the systems. Various learning modes (part-time, e-learning, distant education) were already available in the selected countries in order to open higher education to wider sections of society, which is in line with the social dimension, and there has not been any change in this sense. Student services were already available in all

countries to support the wellbeing of students and the social dimension has not brought a new input and did not cause any change.

The case studies show that the awareness of policy makers on the social dimension of the Bologna Process has not led to action so far. In Finland, there is a high social and political awareness on the importance of participative equity and an advanced level of achievement (i.e., an inclusive higher education system). This advanced position of Finland on the social dimension issues made it a low agenda item in the Bologna Process context. The social dimension is not considered as an area in need of attention in the Bologna Process context. In Germany, the participative inequities are recognised and there have been relevant policies. However, the social dimension in the Bologna Process context did not make a kick-off effect. The relevant issues kept their position in the national agenda and they are barely recognisable in the Bologna Process implementations of Germany. In Turkey, the social dimension relevant items traditionally have not been policy concerns and the social dimension did not change this situation.

The analyses of the changes on the social dimension relevant issues have shown that for none of the countries, the social dimension has had an impact. All of the measures taken in the Bologna Process context are primarily linked to other action areas. In this sense, it is not possible to claim a direct social dimension impact on them.

Research Question 4: What is the explanation of the social dimension's existence in the Bologna Process agenda?

4.1. How did the social dimension enter into the Bologna Process agenda?
4.2. Did a "window of opportunity" open for the social dimension? What have been the repercussions for the social dimension?

In answering this question, the research made use of the multiple streams framework which deals with the question how and why some issues get the attention of people in and around the government while others are ignored.

The social dimension entered into the Bologna Process agenda together with the ESU in 2001. The ESU became a consultative member of the Bologna Process in 2001. According to the multiple streams framework, a change in the cast of actors can open a window of opportunity for a policy issue. As a new actor, the ESU seized this opportunity and pushed the social dimension into the agenda. The ESU was the first policy actor in the Bologna Process that defined inequalities and students' conditions as problems and proposed solution alternatives (e.g., quality pre-higher education, non-discriminatory admission mechanisms and provision of financial aid and other student services, such as accommodation, food and health services and academic and career counselling) in relation to the social dimension. However, the ministers mentioned the social dimension only as an item to be explored in 2001. This means that the social dimension got into the agenda of the Bologna Process, but could not have a successful coupling to have an authoritative decision to be implemented.

After 2001, the ESU continued its softening up activities for the social dimension. It promoted this item in various venues of the Bologna Process, e.g., conferences, seminars, working groups and publications. In time, more actors paid attention to the social dimension. The actors' increasing attention to the social dimension meant widening the scope of problem definitions and the increasing number of solution alternatives for the social dimension. The increasing attention for the social dimension also resulted in Bologna Process level actions.

For an issue to rise in the agenda, a pressing problem definition is essential. The social dimension, until 2007, did not have a problem definition. Only after the BFUG-WG report, participative inequality came to be recognised as a problem by the Bologna actors. However, it has not been recognised as a pressing problem. In addition to a problem, an issue needs a matching solution alternative. The BFUG-WG was assigned to this task. In 2007, the BFUG-WG report declared that the participative inequities are very much depended on the national condition and hence it is not possible to propose a Bologna level solution. Instead, they suggested that each country shall define an action plan and their progress shall be evaluated on that basis. This call was responded by less than half of the Bologna countries and there has not been a follow-up on that matter. This proposal of the BFUG-WG, however, has destructed the attention from the social dimension, most importantly by declaring the impossibility of taking any action on this issue at the Bologna level. The lack of a common action frame for the social dimension continues to be an obstacle in its development.

In addition to the problem and solution alternatives, political perceptivity is also needed to have an authoritative decision to be implemented. It is not possible to observe a climate of urgent change for equity. Unlike the mood of the 1960s and 1970s for the democratisation of higher education, the "national mood" is more for enhancing efficiency and excellence. It is possible to observe a re-elitisation process with increasing trends of rankings and excellence initiatives. Policy makers focus their attention and resources more and more in a way to support this trend.

The opening of a window of opportunity for the social dimension pushed it into the Bologna Process agenda. However, it was not enough for the social dimension to grow into a proper policy. At the moment, the social dimension still exists as a low agenda item in the Bologna Process and there are BFUG working activities on it. Therefore, the social dimension's chance to become an authoritative decision continues when the time comes for it; in other words, when the next window of opportunity opens.

8.2. Main Research Findings & Concluding Statements

The dissertation analysed the social dimension as a neglected element of the Bologna Process.

- The research concluded the definition of the social dimension as the reflection of diversity of the population on the student body accessing, progressing in and completing higher education studies.

The reflection of diversity in this definition places special emphasis on the participation of people from underrepresented groups in higher education. With this definition the social dimension relates to the issues of equality, equality of opportunity in access to higher education. These issues have been policy concerns since the expansion of higher education after World War II. In the beginning the expansion was expected to increase the participation of people from underrepresented groups automatically. Despite differing views, it can be concluded that the inequalities in participation in higher education persist. The social dimension in this sense acknowledges this persistence and goes beyond the goal of increasing enrolment rates. It recognises the need for special action in order to increase participation of people from underrepresented backgrounds in higher education. In addition to this, the completion of studies section of the definition highlights that it is not only about the legal right to apply but also about getting in and being able to complete studies.

- The social dimension is not a priority issue of the Bologna Process.

The analyses of the social dimension according to different actors showed that, except for the ESU, the social dimension is not a priority item for the Bologna Process actors. The low agenda status of the social dimension can also be seen in the low attention paid to it by the countries.

The fact that the social dimension is primarily promoted by a stakeholder, the ESU, rather than by the Bologna countries is an explanation for its low status. According to the multiple streams framework, the agenda elements that are not introduced or advocated by the "visible actors", the ministers in this case, are deemed to remain as low elements of the agenda. The promotion of the social dimension by the countries is necessary for it to get a higher agenda status in the Bologna Process.

- A common frame of action for the social dimension is missing

As a policy platform, the Bologna Process has become a major driver of higher education reforms through the implementation of its suggestions in its signatory countries. The research concludes that the existence of common lines of actions is important to achieve changes in the whole EHEA. The Bologna level actors preferred not to suggest a set of guidelines or a frame of action for the social dimension. The lack of means to be implemented and most importantly to be evaluated at the Bologna level left the social dimension as a policy idea, rather than growing into a policy.

In addition to this, the social dimension has not had clearly defined means. So far, the social dimension means are mainly limited to student services, for which the social dimension has not suggested a certain reform. Furthermore, since 2007, student services are more and more mentioned as means to improve student experiences and satisfaction rather than means to ensure student wellbeing and supporting progression of studies. The other means discussed in this dissertation, admission mechanisms and variety of learning paths, are primarily defined for other action areas of the Bologna Process and are expected to have positive side effects on the social dimension.

- The emphasis on underrepresented groups is the main distinctive feature of the social dimension; albeit, the means to enhance their participation are mostly missing.

The positive side effect expectation limits the spectrum of underrepresented groups to be addressed. The admission mechanisms focus on improving the inclusion of people coming from non-traditional educational routes and adult learners, instead of all underrepresented groups. Although this group is a target group of the social dimension, too, these actions are mainly defined under lifelong learning and hence do not primarily target at the same goals as the social dimension. The flexible learning paths are currently in the form of a discourse. The Bologna Process claims that the ECTS, the two cycle degree structure, modularisation, etc. are going to increase the flexibility of the system which is argued to facilitate the inclusion of underrepresented groups. However, this is not exhibited by empirical findings, yet.

- Monitoring of the social dimension is insufficient

Another explanation for the low agenda status and an illustration for the neglected position of the social dimension is the unsystematic monitoring of it. The call for the improvement of data collection on the social dimension has been continuous since its appearance. In addition to this, the benchmarking exercise of stocktaking has been considered as one of the sanction mechanisms for countries which is missing for the social dimension. The absence of common

actions to be evaluated reduces the motivation of countries to take action, as it has been until 2010.

- The social dimension as a social construct

Chapter 4 explored the social dimension of the Bologna Process by unfolding different understandings of the important actors. As the section on the different definitions of the social dimension by actors revealed, the stakeholder organisations of the Bologna Process emphasised or interpreted the elements of the social dimension heterogeneously. The main logic of this heterogeneity is institutional interests which is the *reason d'être* for these actors. To start with, the ESU is the actor that introduced the social dimension to the Bologna agenda, as it is acknowledged by all other actors. Since then, the ESU has been the main actor advocating the social dimension and in a way defining its main features. These features mostly corresponded to the values and interests that the ESU has traditionally fought for; free and equal access to higher education and student wellbeing created the ESU's main line of argument. The ESU has also been the main actor proposing implementable, very concrete measure to achieve its goals. The Council of Europe has also advocated the social dimension when it entered the agenda and supported it as a principle in general. Its support was also in relation to its own institutional concerns, i.e., enhancing democracy and human rights. In this sense, it interpreted the social dimension as a part in achieving these goals, which it called higher education as a public good and public responsibility. The EUA, as another important actor, paid attention to the social dimension only after 2005. Most of its references to the social dimension have been limited references and in the context of lifelong learning, by interpreting widening access only with respect to non-traditional groups and student services as a quality or a success measure for higher education institutions to satisfy their users. The EUA mainly reflected its interest on increasing institutional autonomy of universities and their funding with the goal of making universities more competitive and achieving excellence. The EC also paid attention to the social dimension rather late, only after 2007. In this attention, the social dimension is interpreted in relation to its possible contribution to sustainable economic growth, e.g., to increase access and graduation rates which would ensure continuous highly qualified labour supply and competitiveness by making the EHEA more attractive for the best students. The EURASHE is another stakeholder organisation for higher education institutions. While mainly affirming the goals of the social dimension, it did not actively promote the social dimension, like the EI.

Another implication of this construction for the social dimension is that its development has been shaped by these actors' attention for the subject and relevant items have changed depending on the actors' perceptions, interests and interpretations. When some of these actors reduced their attention due to their strategic constraints, the social dimension became even more neglected.

- The social dimension as a "fig leaf"

The lack of a common action frame to be translated into national policy agendas can be considered as a sign of its treatment as a "nice sentence" to confirm without proposing any obligation to take action. That is why its goals are commonly agreed and feasible policies (i.e., means) are not produced to achieve these agreed goals. As such it can be concluded that the social dimension functions as a fig leaf in the Bologna Process, a noble idea to agree on but not an urgent issue to act on.

- Also for the countries the social dimension is a low policy item

According to the country case study results, the countries paid attention to the Bologna Process elements if they have defined them as a problem prior to the process. Each country has had certain expectations from the Bologna Process to solve its higher education system's problems (i.e., shortening study periods, decreasing dropout rates, internationalisation, etc.). Since none of the countries defined inequalities of access, progress and completion as a problem in relation to the Bologna Process, they did not consider the issues with a priority.

8.3. Recommendations and Further Research Suggestions

The dissertation claims that the social dimension is not necessarily more complicated or dependent on the national systems than the other action areas of the Bologna Process, e.g., mobility, degree structure, quality assurance etc. Therefore, it suggests the development of a generic guideline of actions at the Bologna level to be transferred to the national level and systematic monitoring of this guideline for the social dimension. This recommendation has been mainly voiced by the ESU and in various international Bologna Seminars on the social dimension. Even though an expansive and cumulative progress is an inherited feature of the Bologna Process, the meaningful existence of the social dimension would require a clearer definition of means to achieve its listed goals. In the development of a possible policy proposal, alternatives shall take into account the challenges of dependency on other policy domains and national contexts arguments.

The social dimension has a disadvantaged position under the current trends of excellence and parsimony for funding higher education, with its goals that would by definition require more public funding. Under these circumstances, there is the bare question articulated by one of the vice rectors of a Finnish university "what would be the incentive for higher education institutions to take costly initiatives in order to ensure participative equity in higher education when everything else is demanding more competition and excellence?" (Personal conversation 2011). This question points to a further discussion on the position of the social dimension in higher education. Is the social dimension a special function of higher education to be encouraged through specific incentives or is it a core function of higher education to be taken care of?

Further research concerning the role of actors on the promotion of the social dimension can focus on the ESU and the role of the individual actors. In addition to this, the composition of the ESU executive board and the profile of its members can be looked at. This would be explanatory for the changing emphasis of the ESU on the social dimension.

Further research can look at the impact of current Bologna Process reforms on achieving the social dimension goals. The reforms to be looked at are the two cycle degree structure, the ECTS, qualifications frameworks and curriculum reform.

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Annexes

Annex I Interviewee List

Interviewee Code	Institution, Position	Place, Date
Finland		
SYL1	SYL, Educational Officer	Helsinki, 18.05.2009
SYL2	SYL, International Officer	Helsinki, 18.05.2009
SYL3	SYL, Social Officer	Helsinki, 18.05.2009
SAMOK	SAMOK, Secretary of International Affairs	Helsinki, 18.05.2009
SA	The University of Turku, Researcher	Turku, 14.05.2009
ME1	The Finnish Ministry of Education, Counsellor of Education	Helsinki, 19.05.2009
ME2	The Finnish Ministry of Education, Special Government Advisor	Helsinki, 20.05.2009
JV	The University of Jyväskylä, Researcher	Helsinki, 20.05.2009
LS	The Finnish Council for University Rectors, member	Helsinki, 21.05.2009
Germany		
BMBF1	The Federal Ministry of Education and Research	10.06.2009, Telephone interview
BMBF2	The Federal Ministry of Education and Research	10.06.2009, Telephone interview
DSW	The German National Association for Student Affairs, General Secretary	15.06.2009, Telephone interview
FZS	The National Association of Student Bodies, spokes person	11.06.2009, Kassel
Turkey		
YÖK1	The Council of Higher Education, Head of the European Union and International Relations Unit	15.06.2009, Ankara
YÖK 2	The Middle East Technical University, Former head of the European Union and International Relations Unit (1997-2008)	16.06.2009, Ankara
BP1	The Middle East Technical University, Former Bologna Promoters Team member (2006-2007)	19.06.2009, Ankara
BP2	The Middle East Technical University, Former Bologna Promoters Team Member (2004-	18.06.2009, Ankara

	2007)	
BP3	The Istanbul Technical University, Bologna Promoters Team Member (2004-2011)	11.06.2009, Istanbul
BP4	The Atilim University, Bologna Promoters Team Member (2008-2011) and national student council member	18.06.2009, Ankara
International Stakeholders		
EC	The European Commission, DG Employment (former DG Education, 2000-2004 and Education and Training Policy 2005-6)	03.06.2009, Brussels
CoE	The Council of Europe, Head of Higher Education and Research Division of the Council of Europe	05.06.2009, Strasbourg
ESU1	The European Students' Union, former ESU chairperson 2008-2010	04.06.2009, Brussels
ESU2	The European Students' Union, former ESU executive committee member 2008-2010	04.06.2009, Brussels
EUA	The European University Association, Secretary General	02.06.2009, Brussels
EI	The Education International, Deputy General Secretary	03.06.2009, Brussels

Annex II Interview Guidelines

It shall be noted that the interviews of this research is conducted within the context of the data collection for the Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process. In this sense, the interviews do not include information only on the social dimension.

European Stakeholders Guideline

Position of the interviewee in his/her institution and involvement in the Bologna Process

What are the priority areas in the Bologna Process according to you and your institution?

Contributions made to the development of the Bologna Process?

If the social dimension has not been mentioned by the interviewee, then it is asked:

What do you think about the social dimension of the Bologna Process?

Is it an important issue according to your institution? Why?

How do you evaluate the position of the social dimension in the Bologna Process?

National Bologna Process Actors

Position of the interviewee in his/her institution and involvement in the Bologna Process

What are the priority areas in your country within the Bologna Process context?

Which reform areas of the Bologna Process have you worked on?

If the social dimension has not been mentioned by the interviewee, then it is asked:

What do you think about the social dimension of the Bologna Process?

Are there any implementations in your country in relation to the social dimension?

What actions are taken/programmes initiated in your country in order to increase the participation of underrepresented groups?

How do you evaluate their application?

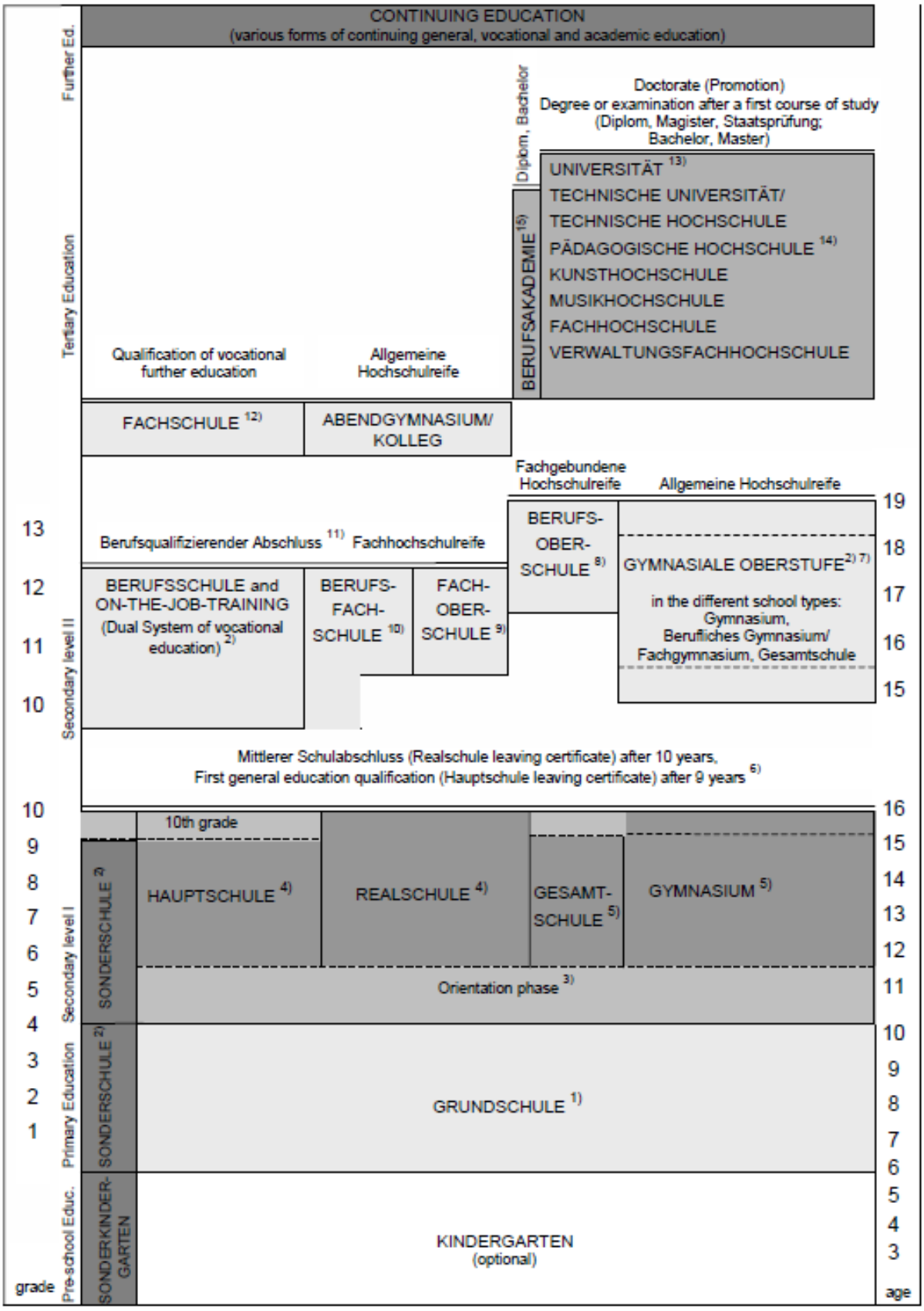
Annex III Trow's Conceptions of Elite, Mass and Universal Higher Education

	Elite (0-15%)	**Mass** (16-50%)	**Universal** (over 50%)
i) Attitudes to access	A **privilege** of birth	A **right** for those with or talent or both certain qualifications	An **obligation** for the middle and upper classes
ii) Functions of higher education	Shaping mind and character of ruling class;	Transmission of skills; preparation for broader range of technical and economic elite roles	Adaptation of 'whole preparation for population' to rapid social and technological change
iii) Curriculum and forms of instruction	Highly structured in terms of academic or professional conceptions of knowledge	Modular, flexible and semi-structured sequence of courses	Boundaries and sequences break down; distinctions between learning and life break down
iv) The student' career'	"sponsored" after secondary school; works uninterruptedly until gains degree	Increasing numbers delay entry; more drop out	Much postponement of entry, softening of boundaries between formal education and other aspects of life; term-time working
v) Institutional characteristics	Homogenous with high and common standards; Small residential communities; Clear and impermeable boundaries	Comprehensive with more diverse standards; 'Cities of intellect' -mixed residential/ commuting; Boundaries fuzzy and permeable	Great diversity with no common standards; Aggregates of people enrolled some of whom are rarely or never on campus Boundaries weak or non-existent
vi) Locus of power and decision making	The Athenaeum' – small elite group, shared values and assumptions	Ordinary political processes of interest groups and party programmes	(The Daily Mail!) 'Mass publics' question special privileges and immunities of academe
vii) Academic standards	Broadly shared and relatively high (in meritocratic phase)	Variable; system /institution 'become holding companies for quite different kinds of academic enterprises'	Criterion shifts from 'standards' to 'value added'
viii) Access and selection	Meritocratic achievement based on school performance	Meritocratic plus 'compensatory programmes' to achieve equality of opportunity	'open', emphasis on 'equality of group achievement' (class, ethnic)

ix) Forms of academic administration	Part-time academics who are 'amateurs at administration'; elected/appointed for limited periods	Former academics now full-time administrators plus large and growing bureaucracy	More specialist full-time professionals. Managerial techniques imported from outside academe
x) Internal governance	Senior professors	Professors and junior staff with increasing influence from students	Breakdown of consensus making institutional governance insoluble; decision-making flows into hands of political authority

Source: Brennan (2004: 23)

Annex IV Basic Structure of the Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany



Annex V Tuition Fee Situation by *Länder* in Germany

Länder	Amount of tuition fees (€)	Administrative fees (€) (for everyone)	Who pays	Current situation
Baden-Wüttenberg	500	40	All students	Abolishment is announced for the summer semester 2012
Bavaria	1) 100-500 (FHs min. 100 & Unis min. 300) 2) 0-2000	-	1) All students 2) Professional bachelor programme students	1) No change 2) Introduced in the summer semester 2011
Berlin	-	50	-	-
Brandenburg	-	51	-	-
Bremen	500	50	From the third semester onwards, students who do not reside in Bremen Students who are studying for more than 14 semesters	No change
Hamburg	375	50	All students	Abolishment is announced for the winter semester 2012
Hesse	500	50	All students	It was charged from the winter semester 2007 until the winter semester 2009
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	-	50	-	-
Lower Saxony	1) 500 per semester or 330 per trimester 2) 600-800 per semester or 400-533 per trimester	75 per semester or 50 per trimester	1) All students 2) Students who exceeded the normal study period for more than four semesters	No change
North Rhine-Westphalia	0-500	-	All students	It was charged for the last time in the summer semester 2011

Rhineland-Palatinate	650	-	Students who exceeded the normal study period, students after completing a first degree and adults	No change
Saarland	1) 500 2) 400	-	1) All students 2) Students who exceeded the normal study period for more than four semesters and adults	1) It was charged from the winter semester 2007 until the winter semester 2009 2) Since the winter semester 2010
Saxony-Anhalt	500	-	Students who exceeded the normal study period for more than four semesters and adults	No change
Saxony	30-450	25-150	Students after completing a first degree	No change
Schleswig-Holstein	-	-	-	-
Thuringia	500	50 per semester or 33 per trimester	Students who exceeded the normal study period for more than four semesters	No change

Source: DSW. Retrieved http://www.studentenwerke.de/pdf/Uebersicht_Studiengebuehren_2011.pdf on 15.10.2011

Annex VI International Stakeholders of the Bologna Process

Name	General des.	Participation year	Interest areas	General activities
European Commission	Executive organ of the European Union	1999	Overall interest in all areas, specifically concerned with mobility, quality assurance, lifelong learning and the promotion of the employability of graduates and support knowledge economies	The main funder of many follow-up activities, such as stocktaking, Bologna Promoters, Bologna Seminars and conferences, an official Prague/Berlin Rapporteur
BUSINESSEUROPE	Employer representative	2005	Employability and knowledge economies, specifically quality assurance, mobility and lifelong learning areas	BFUG meetings and Bologna seminars
Council of Europe	A pan-European organisation	2001	Quality assurance and lifelong learning. Recognition issues, specifically qualifications framework, public responsibility	BFUG meetings, Bologna seminars and follow-up activities
Education International Pan-European Structure	An international union for staff in the higher education and research sector	2005	Mobility, quality assurance and the social dimension (public good and responsibility)	BFUG meetings, Bologna seminars and other follow-up activities
European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)	International association of higher education institutions of the vocational sector	2001	Quality assurance and lifelong learning	Working groups, seminars
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)	A European association of quality assurance agencies	2005	Quality assurance	Quality assurance related follow-up activities, establishment of guidelines
European Students Union (ESU)	An umbrella organisation of national student	2005	Social dimension, quality assurance and mobility	All follow-up activities, Bologna With Student Eyes

	unions			
European University Association (EUA)	Representative organisation for universities in Europe	1999	Degree structures, quality assurance and lifelong learning	All follow-up activities, Trends reports
UNESCO	A pan-European intergovernmental organisation	2003	Mobility and quality assurance	BFUG member

Annex VII Activities of International Stakeholders on the Social Dimension

Name	Place, Date	Activity type	Name of the Event	Type of involvement
European Commission	Budapest Hungary, November 2008	International Bologna seminar	Equality in a knowledge-based society – how to widen opportunities? Best practices in National Action Plans	Participant/speaker Organisator: Hungary, Ministry of Education and Culture
		Surveys	On socio-economic conditions of students: EURO Student and Eurydice	Funder
	2007-2010	Project	Equity in Higher Education from a Student Perspective	Funder, project carried out in cooperation with the ESU
BUSINESSEUROPE	-	-	-	-
Council of Europe	2003	Survey	Students' Participation in the Governance of Higher Education in Europe	Survey carried out. The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research commissioned the report from the Council of Europe for the seminar on student participation.
	Oslo, Norway, June 2003	International Bologna seminar	Student Participation in Higher Education Governance	Co-organisor, Organisator: Ministry of Education and Research Norway
	Strasbourg, France, September 2004	International Bologna Seminar	Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research	Organisator Other participants: ESIB&EC
	Strasbourg, France 2005	Publication	The Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research	Publisher
Education International Pan-European Structure	-	-	-	-
European Association of Institutions in Higher Education	-	-	-	-
European Association for	-	-	-	-

Quality Assurance in Higher Education				
European Students Union (ESU)	Göteborg, Sweden March 2001	Conference	Student Göteborg Convention	Organisator
	Brussels Belgium, November 2001	ESIB 3rd European Student Convention	The Social Dimension of the Bologna Process/Brussels Student Declaration	Organisator
	Athens, Greece February 2003	International Bologna Seminar	Exploring the Social Dimension of the Higher Education Area	Co-organisator with the Ministry of National Education and Religion Affairs Greece
	Oslo, Norway June 2003	International Bologna seminar	Student Participation in Higher Education Governance	Co-organisor with the Ministry of Education and Research Norway
	Sorbanne, France January 2005	International Bologna seminar	The social dimension of the European Higher Education Area and world-wide competition	Rapporteur, Organisator: the French Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research
	Budapest, Hungary November 2008	International Bologna seminar	Equality in a knowledge-based society – how to widen opportunities? Best practices in National Action Plans	Participant/speaker Organisator: The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Hungary
	Malta September 2008	International Bologna seminar	The Social Dimension of Access and Equal Opportunity in Higher Education Institutions	Co-organiser with Malta in collaboration with ESU
European University Association (EUA)	Oslo, Norway June 2003,	International Bologna seminar	Student Participation in Higher Education Governance	Participant Organisator: Ministry of Education and Research Norway
UNESCO	-	-	-	-
Others	2005-2007	Working Group & Report	The Working Group on Social Dimension and Data on the Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries	Chair: Sweden ESU, EUA, EI, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Russia, and the UK
	2007-2009	Working Group		Chair: Cyprus Participants: ESU, EUA,

				EURASHE, UNESCO, Belgium/French Community, Czech Republic, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Russia and the UK
	2009-2012	Working Group	Social Dimension	Chair: Spain Andorra, Austria, Belgium/Flemish Community, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia,"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", UK/EWNI, UK/Scotland, European Commission, BUSINESSEUROPE, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, Eurostat, Eurostudent
	Malaga May 2010,	Seminar	The Social Dimension and Responsibility of Universities	Spain