European Policy Implementation and Higher Education

Analysing the Bologna Process

Cristina Sin, Amélia Veiga, Alberto Amaral

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Introduction

The implementation of the Bologna Process has been hailed as the most important political reform of the European higher education systems. However, some of a more cynical inclination may see Bologna as a heaven-inspired opportunity to bolster the standing of the ministers of education, who in general hold a rather low position in the internal rankings of cabinets, while others, like Martens and Wolf (2009), see Bologna as the European Commission's golden opportunity to increase its creeping competence in this area of national sensitivity protected by the subsidiarity principle.

For a number of years following the signature of the Declaration, the implementation of Bologna was marketed as a triumphal march towards the convergence of the European national higher education systems and the building up of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), with marvellous worldwide capacity for attracting foreign students. In the 2010 Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference, along with the celebration of the Bologna Process' decade anniversary, the ministers solemnly declared that the creation of the EHEA had become a reality. However, the general tone of the ministers' declaration was no longer an expression of unfettered enthusiasm, as the progress reports contained observations that smudged the effulgence of the end product. The following ministerial meetings (Bucharest in 2012 and Yerevan in 2015) reinforced the idea that 'some of the Bologna aims and reforms had not been properly implemented and explained' (Budapest and Vienna Communiqué 2010).

Indeed, in Yerevan more than 50% of the ministers were conspicuously absent and no innovations were introduced, giving the impression that the Bologna Process, once a flagship project of European higher education, was fast losing its dynamism (Vukasovic et al. 2015).

For the European Union, Bologna became an instrument in its Lisbon strategy, the ambition of which was to transform Europe into 'the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010 capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion and respect for the environment' (European Council 2000). The adoption of the Lisbon strategy made higher education an essential ingredient of economic competition and opened the way to a closer link between the Bologna Process and the Lisbon strategy thus strengthening the intervention of the European Commission in higher education.

However, Wim Kok's report in 2004 already referred to the disappointing delivery of the Lisbon strategy 'due to an overloaded agenda, poor coordination and conflicting priorities. Still, a key issue has been the lack of determined political action' (Wim Kok 2004: 6). The failure of the Lisbon strategy was admitted in the Commission's communication *Europe 2020*: 'The steady gains in economic growth and job creation witnessed over the last decade have been wiped out … and 23 million people— or 10% of our active population—are now unemployed. The crisis … has exposed some fundamental weaknesses of our economy' (European Commission 2010: 7).

Today, Europe is a less attractive project than when its founding fathers were still active and seems those working on it are apparently unable to deal with its economic problems. Contrary to the ambitions of both the Bologna Process and the Lisbon strategy, there are millions of unemployed people, especially among the young population, a paradox when one thinks that this is the better-educated generation. Instead of solidarity, there is rampant individualism and the Union does not show the capacity to deal in a timely fashion with any new emerging problem. The recent examples of Greece and of the refugees from Syria and Iraq are just two visible examples of the difficulties of governing Europe and of the progressive loss of its values in a Europe led by a political elite where statesmen are more and more absent.

With few exceptions (see Schomburg and Teichler 2011 or CHEPS and INCHER-Kassel and ECOTEC consortium 2010), there were hardly any critical analyses of the fulfilment of the major objectives of Bologna,

including enhanced employability, increased attractiveness of the EHEA, increased mobility and the relevance of first cycle degrees in the labour market, and no public debate of the outcomes of Bologna was held before embarking on a new phase until 2020. These developments make a strong case in favour of the need for further assessments of the implementation of Bologna, its difficulties and successes, and how they relate to the characteristics of European policy making and implementation. This book sets out to provide a critical account of the difficulties that follow from implementing European policies in areas of national sensitivity, as is the case with higher education, and especially so when soft law-type mechanisms are the only means available to steer policy implementation towards its intended objectives. In principle, soft law mechanisms, as for example the Open Method of Coordination, produce integration but in practice generate eclectic, divergent, unpredictable or perverse outcomes. The book uses Portugal as a case study to analyse the fulfilment of some of the most important operational objectives of the Bologna Process (employability, mobility and attractiveness of the European higher education system). The country also serves as a conjunctural diagnostic instrument for identifying issues that are shared in similar forms in other European countries.

The first part of the book discusses the problems of European policies in general and of education policies in particular, including the Bologna implementation process. Chapter 2, after the Introduction, looks at the broad issues posed by European policy. A short presentation of the delegation theory is presented as it allows for analysing the problems of partial delegation of sovereignty into the European Commission. European construction is based on cooperation between states which leads to setting up supranational models of governance and institutions potentially undermining the importance of the nation-state. The ultimate goal of an integration process is political union. This perspective assumes a progressive transfer of power to supranational institutions bypassing national governments. However, the conception of decision-making processes has been demonstrating that the national governments retain a dominant decision-making role. In fact, consensus generated in the 80s and 90s saw the evolution of the European Economic Community from the Single European Act (European Union 1986) to the Treaty of European Union (1992) and to the Treaty of Amsterdam (European Parliament 1997) and these rested on intergovernmental cooperation between Germany, France and the United Kingdom. Then, the differentiated integration theory is analysed as it allows for an interpretation of the flexibility mechanisms

used to accommodate the diverse interests of the member states. The process of differentiated integration allows member states to move forward at different speeds towards different objectives that would ensure more integration in the longer run. At last, the traditional community method and soft law are critically compared, and the role of the European Court of Justice is considered vis-à-vis the reinforcement of the creeping competence of the Commission (Amaral and Neave 2009).

Chapter 3 provides an overview of European policies as they bear directly on higher education, or which, in an indirect manner, have an impact on this sector. We aim to offer a broader picture of the higher education policy context in which the Bologna Process has unfolded, the place of the Bologna reforms within it, and Bologna's relationship with this broader policy context. Starting with European law, we first examine the provisions of the treaties on the functioning of the European Union, particularly the subsidiarity principle applicable to education. This places education firmly under the competence of member states and limits the Union's contribution to encouraging cooperation between them and to supporting and supplementing their action. Then, the Services Directive adopted in 2006 with a view to deregulating and liberalising service provision within the internal market of the European Union, is presented as an example of erosion of national competences. Considering education as a service has major consequences for the authority of the nation-states for organising and regulating their education systems.

Next, the communications issued by the European Commission are discussed for their relevance in that they represent the main vehicle for setting out the Commission's vision for higher education as a driving force of the growth and development envisaged by the Lisbon strategy. Given the Commission's limited capacity for statutory intervention, the communications stand as a vehicle by which the Commission takes position and exerts influence on higher education.

Last but not least, the Bologna Process is considered against this broader context. Its uniqueness resides in its emergence as an initiative among national governments and in its non-statutory nature (discussed in Chap. 4). However, since 2003 when the European Commission became a member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group, with the same voting rights as the member states, the Bologna Process has been harnessed to serve the Commission's political agenda outlined in the Lisbon strategy. Ever since, the Commission has been wielding influence over the progress of the reforms. Thus, despite its initial independence of the European

Commission, the Bologna Process has become increasingly tied in to the Commission's ambitions of European integration and is viewed as an instrument to fulfil the more wide-ranging objectives of the Lisbon strategy.

Chapter 4 analyses the implementation problems of the Bologna Process in relation to the steering mechanisms based on the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). European higher education policies are to be advanced by the use of soft law instruments embedded in the OMC (De la Porte 2002; Dehousse 2002; Borrás and Jacobsson 2004; De la Porte and Nanz 2004; Goetschy 2004; Gornitzka 2007). The OMC is an instrument of the Lisbon strategy and is employed in areas of member states' competence (e.g. employment, social protection, social inclusion, education, youth, and training). The OMC involves soft law measures based on voluntary binding arrangements, because measures never take the form of regulations, directives or decisions (i.e. hard law). The Council of the European Union defines objectives; establishes instruments to measure performance based on indicators, statistics and guidelines; and promotes benchmarking activities monitored by the European Commission.

The implementation of the Bologna Process, aiming at establishing the EHEA, is driven by policy convergence. Different levels in higher-education policy making—and very certainly so in the Bologna Process—shape the outcome in the form of countervailing legitimacies driving towards common objectives. Certainly, it cannot be presumed that policies 'move from government to objects of implementation unaffected by the road they travel' (Gornitzka et al. 2005: 53). Implementation may be seen as 'mutual adaptation and a learning process, and … as negotiation and interaction' (Gornitzka et al. 2005: 45). But much depends on the clarity of what is to be achieved. Yet key policy statements often appear distressingly abstract, vague in nature, if not devoid of real substance—a characteristic qualified by recent scholarship as 'weasel words' (Amaral and Neave 2009). Faced with such calculated imprecision, it is more necessary than ever to take closer scrutiny of the visions, various and particular, that the various decision-making levels—European, member state and institutional—associate with higher education. For despite the setting of an eleven-year deadline for completion—itself a curious faith in the linearity of cross-national decision-making—recent research into the implementation of Bologna quickly revealed both the complexity of the interaction between levels (Veiga 2012, 2014; Sin 2014) and the reiterative nature of the bargaining process as it worked its way down through those same

decision-making levels (Neave and Veiga 2013). In short, the linearity assumed by the setting of schedules took little account of the crucial significance which different actors' interests and views could bring to bear when putting policy into practice.

Nor is the situation made any less complex in constructing the EHEA. Tying the Bologna Process in with the Lisbon strategy, which from the Commission's point of view the OMC was intended to forward, in effect changed the nature of the Bologna Process. Seen from this broader perspective, both Bologna and the OMC were vehicles to advance what, from the Commission's standpoint, amounted to a new and wider-ranging end in which higher education was but one dimension. The OMC implementation process, which resorted to naming and shaming mechanisms, put pressure on member states to demonstrate that they were implementing the Bologna tools (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, or ECTS, degree structure, Diploma Supplement, etc.). As a result, the ultimate objective, which was the construction of the EHEA, was often forgotten, and Bologna, originally a means for member state interpretation of closer cooperation towards this objective, assumed the role of an 'end'. Bologna, in such a context, thus mutated into a supreme illustration of an 'ends/means' reversal (Neave and Veiga 2013: 74). Therefore, difficulties in coordinating common policies towards the EHEA may also be explained by the subtle shift in purpose and function of Bologna resulting in the ends/means reversal. Additionally they may be explained by tensions between the interpretations different decision-making levels place on Bologna and the differences in interests that come to the fore as the impact of Bologna works at the national and institutional levels (Sin 2012, 2013; Veiga 2010; Neave and Veiga 2013; Veiga and Neave 2015). In short, attention to the dynamic status of Bologna requires a fundamental revision to the way it has been viewed hitherto.

Chapter 5 focuses on the European agenda driving policy change. The central political purpose of the EHEA, as expressed in the Bologna Declaration, is to ensure greater compatibility and comparability between European higher education systems. These, in turn, underpin the three overarching objectives of the Bologna Process: mobility, employability and international attractiveness of European higher education.

The Bologna Declaration set out a number of action lines: adoption of a system of readable and comparable degrees; adoption of a system based on two cycles; establishment of a credit system; promotion of mobility; advancement of European cooperation in quality assurance; and promotion

of a European dimension of higher education. At Prague Communiqué (2001), the ministers emphasised lifelong learning, participation of students and promotion of attractiveness. The Berlin Communiqué (2003) introduced the doctoral level as the third cycle, recognition procedures based on ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, while quality assurance based on accreditation systems aimed at dispelling doubts about educational standards across European Union member states. In Bergen Communiqué (2005), new objectives were added: implementation of national qualifications frameworks, implementation of joint degrees up to doctorate level, and recognition of prior learning. At the London meeting (2007), new areas of action were included: improvements to data collection and a stocktaking exercise that focused on the development of nation-based qualifications framework, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and recognition of prior learning. At their Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009) meeting, for the first time, ministers declared student-centred learning a priority. They addressed the teaching mission of universities, funding, education, research and innovation. Thus, the objectives of Bologna grew in quantity, emphasis and refinement. Some have suggested, however, that such proliferation served merely to sustain the *impression* of progress and of implementation successfully executed (Neave and Amaral 2008). The analysis of the fulfilment of the Bologna policy objectives must then take into account both the dynamic nature of the European, national and institutional processes and the coordination efforts developed at these levels. On the basis of several reports (ESU 2015; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015; Sursock 2015) prepared for the Yerevan Ministerial Conference (2015), this chapter focuses on the analysis of the fulfilment of Bologna's key policy objectives, taking into account two dimensions of policy embeddedness: the development of policies towards the creation and the consolidation of structures, routines, standards, shared meanings, and allocation of resources linked to the pursued objectives and the interaction between different levels of political coordination.

The second part of this book draws on the Portuguese higher education system as a case study. How has the Bologna Process affected institutional and academic practices? How has it affected outcomes in the three areas identified as key Bologna objectives, namely, student employability, mobility and the international attractiveness of institutions? In order to have a firm grasp of the problems of implementation, the first chapter analyses the particular characteristics and features of the Portuguese legislation.

Additional chapters provide an analysis of the achievement of the most important goals of Bologna in Portugal.

Chapter 6 looks into policy making in Portugal. Portuguese society is often presented as soft, gentle and permissive (Amaral and Teixeira 2000). Conflicts seldom lead to violent action. Harsh measures are rarely fully enforced, and sympathy often goes out towards the weak and the disadvantaged. The state has difficulty enforcing systems of 'a posteriori' control (Amaral and Teixeira 2000). Because the Portuguese society has a strong tendency towards 'uncertainty avoidance', legislation plays an important role in regulation, and there is a preference for laws with strong regulatory character, although they are not always taken seriously. The basic principles of the Portuguese higher education system were defined in legislation, and the Autonomy Laws for both universities (1988) and polytechnics (1990) conferred on institutions a substantial degree of autonomy. However, the state remained the main regulator, acting through traditional mechanisms including legislation, funding, input control (through the *numerus clausus* system) and the provision of information. Portugal's ambivalence between state regulation and market coordination was characterised as a form of political hybridism (Amaral and Magahlhães 2001).

After Portugal became a EU member, in 1985, European policies started to play an increasing role. However, the implementation of Bologna was a lengthy business due to political instability and legislative difficulties. From 1999 to 2004 there were six ministers in charge of higher education and none of them stayed long enough in office to adapt the legal framework to Bologna. To complicate things further, the Education Act passed in 1986 stipulated a degree structure not compatible with Bologna, which made a new Act of Parliament necessary. In May 2004 the Parliament changed the Education Act defining the new degree structure. However, the new law was not consensual; all the opposition political parties voted against it and threatened to ask the Constitutional Court for its impugnation. The President of the Republic did not promulgate the Act. At last a new government was elected in 2005 with a Parliament majority. In August 2005 the Parliament passed a new law amending the 1986 Education Act and adapting the degree structure to Bologna. In March 2006 a new decree set the rules for the full adaptation to the Bologna degree structure. Additional reform elements were implemented, including a new quality system compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines and a new legal framework for higher education institutions following recent European trends influenced by New Public

Management. The chapter discusses the key legislative measures which have shaped Portuguese higher education and have influenced the implementation of the Bologna Process in Portugal.

Chapter 7 dwells on employability. The implementation of the three-tiered degree framework, aligned with the Bologna recommendations, put employability on the agenda of Portuguese higher education. The first cycle, the new *licenciatura*, has proved to be problematic from an employability perspective, contrary to the ambitions of the Bologna Process that it should be a relevant qualification for the labour market. Its reduction to three years in most cases (as opposed to four to six years before Bologna) has weakened its value as a higher education degree. The master degree now appears to be the basic qualification, the degree which commands recognition and esteem among academics, students and employers (Cardoso et al. 2012; Sin 2012). The chapter presents national statistics on the evolution of the number of awarded qualifications since the turn of the century and on graduate unemployment, data which shed light on the employability of the Portuguese first degree compared to the master degree. A steep increase in the number of master graduates has been noted since the implementation of the Bologna reforms, indicative of student preferences for this education level. Moreover, differences in unemployment, including long-term unemployment, between *licenciatura* graduates and master graduates, consistently less severe for the latter, and the higher remuneration attached to the master degree reveal the labour market's tendency to value the master degree over the *licenciatura* in the aftermath of the Bologna Process. Nonetheless, higher education continues to be an investment worth making, as only 10.1 % of higher education graduates overall are unemployed compared to 17.3 % among those who completed primary education, or 14.7 % among those who completed secondary education.

After a national overview, the chapter lays bare the perceptions of Portuguese academics, students and employers. We first look at the importance employability seems to assume for Portuguese higher education institutions. Then, we move on to consider the commitment to this agenda of lay academics at the grass roots, as expressed in concrete measures taken to improve students' employability. We analyse the differences between the different kinds of institutions in the Portuguese higher education landscape (universities and polytechnics, public and private institutions), revealing more involvement on the part of academics in polytechnics and private institutions. Across the higher education landscape,

those measures which imply cooperation with employers have the poorest occurrence. Next, we examine employers' perceptions, which reveal a worrying incidence of missing knowledge (almost a quarter) about the consequences of the Bologna reforms on the employability of the *licenciatura*. This signals their deficient understanding of degrees, while the Bologna instruments introduced to improve transparency and knowledge of qualifications (qualifications framework, learning outcomes, etc.) have had only a moderate effect. Similar to the academics' perceptions, the employers' own evaluation of their participation in activities undertaken by higher education institutions to improve employability exposes the embryonic stage of collaboration between higher education institutions and economic actors in Portugal. The only activities with significant employer participation are work internships and student visits to their organisations. In contrast, participation in curricular design/review, or in internal or external quality assurance reviews score very low. Finally, we expose students' generally negative opinions about the employability of the first degree after the Bologna reforms, with somewhat less pessimistic views among polytechnic students and students in the private sector. Students' choices after completion of the *licenciatura* shed further light on these perceptions. The enrolment in a master degree emerges as the first option after graduation for the majority of students (across institutional type and gender), suggesting a depreciation in the exchange value of the *licenciatura* in the job market. Indeed, a large proportion of *licenciatura* students (between 33.3% and 45.1% depending on higher education sector) reported that they felt unprepared to enter the labour market. Again, differences were noted by higher education sector, with private and polytechnic students in larger numbers intending to start working.

Chapter 8 examines the achievement of the mobility objective in Portugal. The focus lies on student mobility and, within it, on credit mobility exclusively (data on degree mobility have only been available since 2013/2014). For credit mobility, we use the statistics on Erasmus mobility available from the European Commission, because national data for credit mobility as a whole is lacking.

Portugal initiated the process of aligning its higher education system to the Bologna Process only in 2005 and mobility was promoted through legislation which introduced the ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, and instruments such as the learning agreement or the academic transcript record. Compared to the ascending evolution of mobility in Europe since the launch of the Bologna Process, mobility in Portugal has grown at an even faster

rate. Even so, the latest figures available suggest that only 7.4% of graduates are mobile, still far short of the 2020 target of 20%, which was ambitiously set by the Leuven Communiqué in 2009. Another drawback of mobility in Portugal is its unbalanced character. Incoming mobility has superseded outgoing mobility from around 2007/2008 onwards, Portugal thus becoming an importer country. Although outgoing mobility has grown too, preferred destinations (Spain and Eastern Europe) suggest that proximity and living costs have been the factors which supported its rise. This owes much to the difficult socioeconomic conditions of the country. Already lagging behind other Western European countries in terms of socioeconomic development, the country has been severely hit by the economic crisis in 2009.

The chapter then analyses the academics' and students' perceptions on the impact of the Bologna Process on mobility, its positive effects and negative unintended consequences, and the factors which influence mobility, either as obstacles or drivers. A welcome effect of the Bologna Process, identified by academics, has been the standardisation of administrative procedures and of mobility instruments across Europe. No doubt, this has facilitated student mobility. But despite ensuring credibility and ultimately benefiting recognition, administration continues to be burdensome. Another beneficial consequence of Bologna for mobility has been the convergence of degree structures across Europe, rendering mobility periods more transparent. However, the best intentions of the *pays politique* to make courses more flexible and comparable have resulted in unintended negative effects at the institutional level. The foreshortening of the first degree translated into a compression of subject matter and reduced flexibility. Stricter curricular requirements are manifest in restrictions on the timing of mobility, the predominance of compulsory subjects or the requirement that some can only be passed at the home institution, as both students and academics testify. These constraints impact negatively on mobility, generating fears among Portuguese students that study abroad will prejudice their timely completion of the degree.

Besides curricular inflexibility, financial constraints emerge as the foremost barrier to the mobility of Portuguese students. The absence of public support and the burden on the family pocket stand out. These factors are aggravated by the lower incomes of Portuguese families and their reduced purchasing power in Western European countries. Combined with high unemployment and a hostile labour market in Portugal, such factors explain why employability emerges as the main motivation for students to become mobile. For them, mobility is an antechamber to living abroad, a trial period preceding eventual employment abroad (Sin et al. 2015).

Chapter 9 examines the achievement of attractiveness in the Portuguese context. One of the objectives of the Bologna Process has been to boost the drawing power and attractiveness of the EHEA, an objective closely linked to policies for the internationalisation of higher education. This chapter focuses on the analysis of internationalisation rationales, attractiveness as a European political objective and attractiveness in the Portuguese context. In Portugal there has never been a consistent policy for internationalising higher education. In the early days of the Bologna Process, studies attributed the low priority of internationalisation to the government's lack of a clear strategy in this area and governmental instability (Rosa et al. 2004; Veiga et al. 2005, 2006). As a result, until quite recently, Portuguese internationalisation strategies were marginal both for public and private higher education institutions (Veiga et al. 2006), and were more reactive than proactive.

Internationalisation rationales of Portuguese institutions used to be mainly cultural and academic (Veiga et al. 2006). The main approaches to internationalisation were student and staff mobility in the context of European mobility programmes and the enrolment of students from the former Portuguese colonies. The former followed a political and academic rationale as staff and student exchanges sought closer alignment between Portugal and Europe. The academic rationale related to educational improvement was also obvious in institutions' attempts to align study programmes to the Bologna model. Yet, the State's inefficiency in passing legislation to allow such alignment led to mixed success. Only public universities—as the only institutions to enjoy full autonomy—could implement the changes (Veiga et al. 2005). The enrolment of students from former colonies followed a political and cultural rationale. The Portuguese state subsidised special places for these in the pursuit of improved cooperation with countries that had in the 1970s gained their independence from Portugal. The economic rationale hardly underpinned the internationalisation approaches of public Portuguese higher education institutions (HEIs). A profit argument did not make sense for them, as they were not allowed to charge higher fees for foreign students. This was permitted in the case of private institutions, already confronted with diminishing student numbers, which could thereby respond to an economic rationale. Moreover, the government discouraged internationalisation abroad, despite its market rhetoric (Veiga et al. 2006). Not only did it prohibit franchising education activities and the recognition of foreign degrees conferred under franchising activities, it also chose to prohibit education activities abroad leading to the award of a recognised Portuguese degree.

As a result, the Portuguese private institutions operating in the former colonies only awarded degrees under the local national law rather than Portuguese degrees (Veiga et al. 2006).

However, in recent years, following the financial difficulties experienced by HEIs due to decreasing state funding (Teixeira 2012) and aggravated by the consistently declining number of students enrolling in higher education (Fonseca 2012), the economic rationale has emerged as a determinant for both public and private institutions. Public institutions have had to look for alternative sources of funding due to decreasing public budgets, while private institutions tried to cope with a decreasing number of national candidates to higher education. Indicative of the increasing relevance of the economic rationale, in 2014 the government passed legislation allowing public institutions to increase fees for non-European students. Charging higher tuition fees for these students and attracting more European students, which count in the funding formula for public HEIs, have become ways for these HEIs to supplement their revenues. Furthermore, both public and private HEIs started developing strategies to increase provision of higher education outside Portugal, especially in the Portuguese speaking countries. The engagement with attractiveness of Portuguese higher education will also come under scrutiny on the basis of the perceptions of academics and students.

The book closes with an analysis which brings together the insights gained after having dissected the Bologna Process against a complex background of wider European policies and after having looked into the effects that implementing the goals of the Bologna Process has had, and continues to have, for Portuguese higher education. How far have the key issues underpinning the EHEA—employability, mobility and attractiveness of European higher education—been addressed? Can they be sustained in the face of the ongoing financial crisis? How far has higher education in Portugal moved towards the political ambitions entertained at the European level? Do the measures adopted in Portugal and Portuguese institutions to implement the Bologna Process effectively contribute to building the EHEA? We have sought answers in national data, as well as in the perceptions and the practices, institutional and academic, with regard to the employability, mobility and attractiveness objectives. We have found that Bologna instruments such as the Bologna degree structure, the Diploma Supplement, or the credit system so far have had limited contribution to the objectives which underpin the EHEA, confirming the results of previous research (Veiga and Amaral 2009). The three-tier

degree structure has not enhanced employability; there are low expectations regarding the transition of the students after the first cycle to the labour market; the growth in mobility has been modest; mobility instruments have low relevance for academic staff; and obstacles to mobility persist. International attractiveness is a poorly articulated goal for institutions, having only recently become a strategy at the national level.

In this final part, Portugal is used as a conjunctural diagnostic instrument for identifying issues that are also shared in similar forms in other European countries. Because the Bologna Process uses 'flexibility' to deal with diversity of higher education systems and is prone to 'interpretative dispersion', we wondered whether Portugal could be singular in its achievement of the Bologna objectives. The most important findings of our study are, therefore, analysed using the lens of the current literature on other European countries to determine how far the Portuguese experience mirrors issues elsewhere. Indeed, Portuguese findings are similar to other European systems, especially the Mediterranean countries, in the fulfilment of Bologna objectives related to employability or mobility, which we have attempted to explain by resorting to the varieties of capitalism theory (Hall and Soskice 2001) and socioeconomic indicators. Thus, we argue that policy success is not only dependent on the implementation method, political will or institutional endeavor, but that the socioeconomic context plays a considerable role, as it can facilitate or hinder the pursuit of reforms. If we gnore it, we run the risk of misinterpreting the outcomes of policy and the reasons behind it, as well as misplacing the blame for underachievement. By analysing the consequences and outcomes of policy—some hoped for, others more perverse—we hope to help bring the 'implementation loop' full circle.

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Policy

General Issues of European Policy

INTRODUCTION

Governance theory deals with the new and complex societies 'in which the local and the global interact in dynamic processes of structural change' (Newman 2003: 3). In the European Union, the dispersion of authority away from central governments, resulting from reallocation of power upwards (to the Union), downwards (to the regions and local authorities) and sideways (to public/private networks) (Hooghe and Marks 2001) creates complex problems at the level of coordination (de la Porte and Pochet 2004). This is particularly true in the case of higher education where policy implementation involves multiple levels: the supranational community level, the national level, in a number of cases a regional level and at last the institutional level. The implementation needs the action of universities, autonomous institutions which in Europe traditionally have a high level of academic freedom. However, it is not guaranteed that the top administration and academics share similar views about the implementation of education policies. To make things more difficult in terms of European coordination, education is considered an area of national sensitivity, protected by subsidiarity, which limits the range of policy implementation instruments that can be used.

In this chapter we will analyse the general issues of policy implementation in Europe, leaving the analysis of the particular problems of higher education policies to Chaps. 3 and 4. Policy definition and implementation

is a complex problem in the European Union, due to the presence of a large number of member states, each with very diverse economic, social and cultural interests needing to be accommodated. The successive enlargements of the number of member states have forced a change in the decision-making rules, replacing the traditional unanimous vote by a qualified majority vote in order to avoid too frequent vetoes that would make the Union ungovernable. Additionally, differentiated integration allows member states to move forward at different speeds towards different objectives that would ensure more integration in the longer run.

Another interesting issue is related to delegation problems. The traditional community method implies partial delegation of the sovereignty of member states in the Commission, which has resulted in agency loss and the creeping competence of the Commission. This erosion of sovereignty has been dealt with by replacing the traditional community method with the increasingly popular soft law mechanisms, although the new methodology may present difficulties in coordination and convergence of policies.

Still another political device used to accommodate the very diverse interests of the member states consists in the use of ambiguous wording in the European treaties and laws, which are open to different interpretations at the level of the member state. However, the frequent appeals of the Commission to the legal interpretations of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) have considerably curtailed the possibility of national interpretations, reinforcing the creeping competence of the Commission (Amaral and Neave 2009).

In what follows, a short presentation of the delegation theory allows understanding of the problems derived from partial delegation of sovereignty into the European Commission. Next, the differentiated integration theory is introduced, as it allows for an interpretation of the flexibility mechanisms used to accommodate the diverse interests of the member states. At last, the traditional community method and soft law are critically compared, the role of the ECJ is considered and the problems of change and convergence are analysed.

DELEGATION THEORIES

In the European Union there is considerable delegation of sovereignty from the member states to the European Commission, which may raise the problem of agency loss. One important theory to analyse delegation problems is the 'Principal-Agent' theory. The principal-agent theory aims

at analysing contractual and hierarchical relations between actors in a firm (Kassim and Menon 2002). Its use includes assessing 'the efficacy of strategies and mechanisms devised to ensure agent compliance' (Kassim and Menon 2002: 2) or analysing the role of external parties in overseeing public agencies (Prendergast 2001). The principal-agent relationship has also been used to explore 'the motivations that lead principals to delegate functions and confer authority to agents in the political world' (Kassim and Menon 2002: 3). By analogy, this perspective may be extended to include the workings of the European Union and the European Commission that are in receipt of substantial delegated power from member states (Thatcher and Stone Sweet 2002).

Delegation raises the classical principal-agent dilemma: how can a party (the principal) that delegates some activities by contractual agreement with a second party (the agent) be sure that the agent will perform as it is intended in the delegation contract? Because there is an asymmetric information balance in favour of the agent, it is necessary to take 'into account the difficulties [the principal faces] in monitoring the agent's activities' (Sappington 1991: 45 cited in Dill and Soo 2004: 68). Kassim and Menon refer to two major delegation problems:

> … *adverse selection*, where the principal, responsible for recruitment, is unable to observe directly and, therefore, assess the knowledge or skill possessed by the agent and *moral hazard*, where the agent enjoys superior information, not only about his or her own preferences and abilities, but also about the tasks assigned to him or her, and his or her own actions, which are not usually observable to the principal. (Kassim and Menon 2002: 2)

As it is not possible for the principal to exercise an extremely detailed control over the activities of the agent because of the high costs of this monitoring activity, it is important that the principal creates incentives for the agent to perform as the principal would prefer, thus avoiding the possibility of the agent's opportunistic behaviour in 'ways inimical to the preferences of the principal' (Pollack 1997: 108). In the case of delegation in the European Commission, there have been considerable difficulties of ensuring compliance by the agent. Several authors have referred to the 'creeping competence' of the European Commission, as emphasised by Pollack:

> Over time, however, the EU has expanded the range of its activities dramatically, so that by the early 1990s, the policies of the Union had spread from

the core economic activities of the common market to embrace almost every conceivable area of political, economic and social life. (Pollack 2000, 520)

This phenomenon is known as 'agency loss' in the literature on delegation (Schäfer 2004). As Schäfer recognises, 'the Community Method delegates considerable power to the Commission and the European Court of Justice and offers ample opportunity to act independently of their principals' (Schäfer 2004: 3). There are two additional characteristics that make it more difficult to monitor the activities of the European Commission as the agent: the presence of multiple principals and a single agent, and the very considerable preference heterogeneity of the principals. The presence of multiple principals (the member states) means that the Commission needs to answer to their different interests, which creates the opportunity for the Commission not to answer to any of them. This is even made easier as the principals have many diverse economic, social and cultural interests, which creates substantial preference heterogeneity and makes it very difficult for the Commission to behave as all the principals would want it to behave. Therefore the question is how to reconcile the interests of the European Commission, which represents the interests of the European Union, and the interests of individual member states, which display large preference heterogeneity.

Differentiated Integration in Europe

A way of dealing with preference heterogeneity has been by introducing flexibility, which is at the core of differentiated integration. The latter refers to 'the possibility for different member states to have different rights and obligations with respect to certain common policy areas', as a means to achieve more integration in the long run (Kölliker 2001: 125). Variations and disparities between member states are often associated with the diversity of interests, the growing complexity of decision-making and diverging expectations towards integration (Emmanouilidis 2007). Additionally, national conditions of cross-national policy convergence are associated with cultural, institutional and socioeconomic factors (Heinze and Knill 2008). Leo Tindemans, a former Belgian Prime Minister and former member of the European Parliament, used economic and financial factors to explain variation and the need to assume flexibility in EU policy decision-making:

It is impossible at the present time to submit a credible programme of action if it is deemed absolutely necessary that, in every case, all stages should be reached by all the States at the same time. The divergence of their economic and financial situations is such that were we to insist on this, progress would be impossible and Europe would continue to crumble away. (Tindemans 1976: 20)

Alexander Stubb (1996) made the first attempt to categorise differentiated integration using the variables 'time' (multi-speed), 'space' (variable geometry) and 'matter' (à la carte). Katharina Holzinger and Frank Schimmelfennig (2012) underlined that the variables 'matter' and 'space' 'are by definition involved in all types of differentiation' (Holzinger and Schimmelfennig 2012: 296) and further developed a categorisation of differentiated integration.

The different models of differentiated integration appear to take the European Union and the member states as the main reference points. However, in the field of higher education policies, research has underlined that differentiated integration cannot turn a blind eye to institutional factors promoting discretionary decisions and practices which nuance differentiated integration (Veiga et al. 2015). Some models of differentiated integration involve a multi-level approach and include subnational jurisdictions, although they point to a lower level of integration. 'Differentiated integration as a descriptive concept is useful to understand how Bologna is building the EHEA in practice, and these models provide the theory of differentiated integration with an explanatory potential' (Veiga et al. 2015: 89). In the framework of the differentiated integration theory, the Bologna Process has been presented as an example of 'flexible integration' (at the start) and subsequently as an illustration of the 'Europe à la carte' model (Holzinger and Schimmelfennig 2012).

Hard Law Versus Soft Law

There is an increasing popularity of soft law mechanisms in the European Union, including the 'open method of coordination' (OMC) (Veiga and Amaral 2006, 2009). Guzman and Meyer (2009) define soft law as

those nonbinding rules or instruments that interpret or inform our understanding of binding legal rules or represent promises that in turn create expectations about future conduct. (Guzman and Meyer 2009: 5)

The authors discuss why states enter into soft law agreements that are 'nonbinding', instead of opting for more binding forms of hard law. They argue that nonbinding rules can produce legal consequences when they shape states' expectations as to what constitutes compliant behaviour. Imposing sanctions for violating international legal rules has, in general, a negative sum character, which makes in many cases binding legal obligations inefficient, as there is a preference for loss avoidance. This might explain the increasing popularity of the use of soft law in the European Union, which, as argued by the delegation theory, may under certain circumstances be an effective way for states to control their uncertainty over the future desirability of legal rules adopted today (Guzman and Meyer 2009). In the case of the European Union, soft law is useful to solve straightforward coordination games in which the presence of a focal point is enough to generate compliance.

Reputation is important in encouraging compliance with international law, which explains the 'naming and shaming mechanisms' that are usually associated with the OMC. When states fail to comply with an agreement, they lose international credibility 'and this will make it more difficult to enter into future promises' (Guzman and Meyer 2009: 22).

The Community Method and Agency Loss

In the traditional European Union community method of governance, the European Commission has the monopoly for initiating legislative procedures and plays a major role in taking member states to court for failing to implement decisions, as it monitors compliance with Union law. The Council of Ministers decides in most cases by qualified majority voting, the European Parliament plays an active role in passing European laws with the Council, and the ECJ ensures the uniform interpretation of community law (Wallace 2000). In principle, the community method might force a member state to implement measures it vehemently opposes (Hagedorn 2003). However, the Luxembourg Compromise (30 January 1966) mitigated this possibility as it reached to settle a crisis between France and its five community partners and the European Commission:

> Where, in the case of decisions which may be taken by majority vote on a proposal of the Commission, very important interests of one or more partners are at stake, the Members of the Council will endeavour, within a reasonable time, to reach solutions which can be adopted by all the Members of the Council while respecting their mutual interests and those of the Community. (European Council 1966)

This political development is characteristic of the way the European Union moves towards European integration. The Luxembourg Compromise is only a political declaration by foreign ministers and cannot amend the Treaty. However, the Luxembourg Compromise has remained in force even though, in practice, it might simply be evoked without actually having the power to block the decision-making process. The Treaty of Rome provided for a gradual transition from unanimous voting to qualified voting,[1] thus eliminating a number of veto situations.

In the early 1990s, national governments decided to oppose further expansion of the European Union's competencies that were eroding the sovereignty of the nation-state (Dehousse 2002: 2). Some governments were annoyed with directives imposed by the new qualified majority voting rule and were determined to avoid the interference of the Commission in sensitive areas such as education, culture or health (Pollack 2000). In turn, some regions, such as the German länder, opposed what they considered an attack on their constitutionally granted powers. This reaction brought about the revival of the subsidiarity principle in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty with the famous 'double negative' formulation of the principle in article 5 of the Treaty:

> In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, only and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member State and can, therefore, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community. (Pollack 2000: 526)

Another characteristic of European politics is the use of carefully weighed wording, designed to overcome the incapacity of member states to agree on essential goals and priorities (Dehousse 2005). The use of 'weasel words', which seek to deprive a statement of its force or to turn a direct commitment aside, allows not only for diverse interpretations of the treaties, but also it enhances and reinforces the supranational role of the ECJ, a development that member states viewed as increasingly undermining their sovereignty (Amaral and Neave 2009: 272). The EU Treaties and laws are frequently characterised 'by a high degree of fluidity and vagueness':

> European law has, as every EC lawyer knows, a rich tradition of evolving through the aid of such '*weasel words*', in the sense of terms which are ambiguous and open, and which are even chosen for these very characteristics. (De Burca 1999: 9)

This has given a very important role to the ECJ as the ultimate interpreter of what the legislation means. This power of the Court was reinforced by its own decision:

> It was the ECJ itself which, in 1964, established the principle that the Community's common laws and regulations take precedence over the law of Member States. (see the Italian case of Flaminio Costa v. ENEL, Case 6/64)

Henri de Waele, in defence of the ECJ from accusations of excessive activism, argues:

> After all, the original EC Treaty (now the 'Treaty on the Functioning of the Union') was a 'traité-cadre' or framework treaty, which regulates few topics in exhaustive detail. In addition, treaties as such are said to be a most particular genre, products of protracted and laborious negotiations. The end-result of such negotiations is usually a vague and open-ended patchwork, replete with delphic formulas that reflect hard-wrought compromises. (de Waele 2010: 9)

Following Henri de Waele, whenever the incapacity of the member states to reach a clear agreement produced an incomprehensible and/or vague document, the Court was expected to solve the resulting controversies by producing an authentic interpretation. And it is true that 'the wording of many provisions is indeed terse and laconic, and this naturally allows for an interpretation that judges consider best, trying to find the "best fit" in light of the existing rules and the legal system as a whole' (de Waele 2010: 10).

Some authors consider that the Article 220 EC (now Article 19 TEU) contains a 'broad mandate for the Court to lay down rules of law in accordance with its own preferences' (de Waele 2010: 5). This is because the Article established that 'the ECJ shall, in accordance with the Treaties, give preliminary rulings… on the interpretation of Union law or the validity of acts adopted by the institutions'. According to de Waele:

> The fact that something is not mentioned, or not fully covered by treaty provisions should in itself never be considered decisive: this is meant to leave room for detailed new rules that the ECJ may rightfully bring into being. (de Waele 2010: 9)

The final consequence of the activity of the ECJ has been that:

> With the passing of time, the ECJ has become the architect of ever more numerous institutional innovations, transforming and constitutionalising the Treaty architecture, and amending both the horizontal (inter-institutional) and the vertical (EC – Member States) division of powers in equal measure. (de Waele 2010: 5)

It is rather ironic that the attempts at softening the preference heterogeneity of the member states by using an ambiguous terminology open to diverse interpretations may end up in an interpretation of the ECJ that becomes binding to all member states, while usually upholding the position of the European Commission, which creates further agency losses. As recognised by the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions:

> From the start, the ECJ has regarded it as its supreme duty to realise the fundamental principles of the EU Treaty on the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons. Whatever the politicians cannot – or dare not – clarify, is clarified by the judges in the ECJ. (Fagforbundet 2008: 4)

The Open Method of Coordination

In the 1994 European Council held at Essen (European Council 1994), heads of state and government reached an agreement on employment policy using a soft law approach that avoided the undesirable interference of the EC in domestic policy-making. The 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam in its employment chapter confirms the basic elements—definition of common objectives, national implementation plans and surveillance by the European Commission and member states—of what would become the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).

As this procedure did not include sanctions (de la Porte and Pochet 2001), the Luxembourg Process (November 1997) tried to overcome the lack of legal clout by creating mechanisms for reinforcing the commitment made by governments through 'naming and shaming' the 'laggards'. Governments were asked to draw up a 'yearly national action plan', detailing their approach to fighting unemployment. This document could be used thereafter to compare word and action and the degree of fulfilment of promises and implementation performances. Although being presented as a tool for mutual learning and for revealing best practices, it also allowed for ranking of member states' performances, putting pressure on low performers.

At the March 2000 European summit (European Council 2000), the Lisbon strategy was adopted and retrieved the procedures already implemented and applied with the Employment Strategy—European guidelines, national action plans, peer review and naming and shaming—that were presented as a quasi-novelty under the name of 'Open Method of Coordination' (European Council 2000). OMC is compatible with the subsidiarity principle, allowing the implementation of policies without further delegation of power to the Commission (Borras and Jacobsson 2004: 197), thus avoiding agency loss. Dehousse argues that the OMC

> appeared as a compromise between a desire for common action, on the one hand, and the governments' desire to maintain some degree of control over tools they considered essential for their political future, on the other. (Dehousse 2005: 7)

Thus, the implementation structure of the Lisbon strategy was designed to ensure that member states would have control over matters of high political salience (Scharpf 2006). The European Council plays the role of major decision maker, defining the agenda setting, while the Commission presents proposals and recommendations to the Council and assesses the policies and progress of the member states (European Commission 2005). The Council agrees on a common vision for the Union, and sets medium- to long-term priorities based on the proposals of the Commission. However, the Commission plays an important role despite its apparently modest posture:

> The search for cognitive convergence, which is at the heart of the OMC, involves tasks the Commission is better able to accomplish than any other institution, such as the monitoring of national action plans or the preparation of reports on the situation at European level, which are key elements in a process of knowledge accumulation. (Dehousse 2002: 11)

The European Commission has used its technical expertise, its knowledge of policy issues (Dehousse 2002) and its budget to progressively gain power by means of informal influence, as was the case of employment policies (Trubek and Mosher 2003) or the Bologna Process (Amaral and Neave 2009). Examples for the latter are the research programmes and reports financed by the Commission, such as Tuning, U-Map, U-Multirank, Map-ESG and IBAR, on the implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines, Bologna trends reports, and so on. And there are numerous organisations, proudly self-declared as independent, that survive with the

help of generous European Union funding. And those include both higher education organisations such as EUA and Eurashe, student organisations such as ESU and agencies such as ENQA and EQAR.

The implementation structure uses a large number of committees. The introduction of implementation committees (comitology) into the decision-making process may be seen as aiming at 'facilitating a degree of continuing Council control over the Commission in the exercise of its executive functions' (Scott and Trubek 2002: 3). Before the Commission can implement a European legal act, it must consult, for the detailed implementation measures it proposes, a committee, chaired by the Commission, where every member state is represented.

With the implementation of the Lisbon strategy, committees of a different nature were created, holding a position in between the Council and the Commission:

> The Commission handles the secretariat and is also a full member of each committee, and the committees are to supply opinions on the request of either the Council or the Commission… The new committees, being the only preparatory bodies before the Council level, have an important role in the policy process of the OMC. (Borras and Jacobsson 2004: 198)

However, the Commission has frequently been able to domesticate the committees that were supposed to control its activities by moving them 'from policing the outcome of rulemaking to technical collaboration with the rule makers', thus becoming 'as much the artificers of Commission proposals as arbiters of their acceptability' (Sabel and Zeitlin 2006: 12).

With the use of the OMC, as member states remain in control of politics, they are not confronted with the principal-agent problem (Schäfer 2004), while the nonbinding character of soft law protects them from undesirable consequences. And when they decide to implement unsavoury policies they can always use Brussels as a scapegoat. What remains to be seen is how far a soft law instrument such as the OMC, without apparent enforcing power, can produce and coordinate change. Borras and Jacobsson (2004: 196) quote Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) to argue that policy change in the absence of coercion is possible. Scharpf considers that learning processes can play an important role in moving from a policy impasse into effective action (1997: 63) and Dehousse argues that the OMC, as a learning process, can be a mechanism capable of 'initiating or facilitating reforms to be conducted at the national level' (Dehousse

2002: 10) where mimetic and normative isomorphism plays an important role (Radaelli 2000: 29).

However, the OMC's naming and shaming may not be effective for a number of reasons: the limited monitoring capacity of the Commission, as it relies strongly on data and statistics provided by national governments; lack of incentive and discretion of both the Commission and member states for shaming infringing member states; and, as obligations are not precisely drawn, member states can always make counter-claims discrediting an eventual shaming from the Commission (Idema and Kelemen 2006, 111–113). In the following sections, we analyse how national action plans, benchmarks and indicators are used in the OMC as tools used both for comparing best practice and for supporting naming and shaming actions which aim at putting pressure on member states.

National Action Plans

The governments of member states draft national action plans, reporting on progress made towards the proposed objectives and setting new targets for the future. National action plans serve the dual purpose of being a mutual learning tool, facilitating the identification of best practices and innovative techniques (de la Porte et al. 2001; Jenson and Pochet 2002) and allowing the Commission and the Council to identify implementation problems, which may result in recommendations addressed to the 'laggards'. However, the recommendations are not legally binding 'and there are no formal sanctions for countries that fail to make progress towards common objectives' (Trubek and Trubek 2005: 349). To avoid being labelled as laggard, 'national reports often tend to present a flattering situation and the action plans are more verbose on the progress accomplished than on the initiatives taken' (Dehousse 2005: 15).

Benchmarks

Benchmarking is a learning process aiming at improving the performance of companies by adopting the 'best practice' available. Benchmarking monitors outputs and processes, not inputs, and focuses on performance indicators. Benchmarking in the European Union was proposed by the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT) to optimise competitiveness policies (ERT 1996).

The OMC uses benchmarking both to identify good practices and for naming and shaming of poor performers (Netherlands Council for Social Development 2004: 14). The early implementation of benchmarking

activities was met with resistance from the member states because they felt at risk. To soften their resistance it was agreed that indicators should be contextualised, taking into account national differences and diversity (de la Porte et al. 2001; Hemerijck and Visser 2003).

The European benchmarks are reference levels of European average performance. Education benchmarks, for example, relate to objectives such as improving the quality and effectiveness of the European Union education and training systems, facilitating access of all to education and training systems, and opening them up to the wider world. These benchmarks were updated for 2020 by the European Council of 12 May 2009 under the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (Education and Training 2020, 2009) and include an objective of at least 40% of 30–34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment and an average of at least 15% of adults participating in lifelong learning (European Council 2009). The Council further recommended that the benchmark on early leavers from education and training should be improved, that the possibility of proposing further indicators in the areas of mobility, employability and language learning should be analysed and that special attention should be paid to the areas of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Indicators

The negotiation of appropriate indicators has led to lengthy and not always successful discussions, as member states want to avoid indicators that would show them in an unfavourable light. The Commission recognised that 'the development of relevant, analytically-sound and universally-accepted indicators, and especially of the underlying statistical data, is a long and complex exercise and demands technical expertise and political support' (European Commission 2004: 18) and deplored that so far data were still produced by countries on a voluntary basis.

Defining indicators faces two kinds of problems. On the one hand, member states will oppose indicators based on methodological issues raised by national experts, especially when these indicators would make some countries 'look bad in certain performances' (Kröger 2004). On the other hand, indicators are scourged by the low quality of available European statistics (Peña-Casas and Pochet 2001).

For the Lisbon strategy, the instruments for naming and shaming are the Lisbon scorecards produced by the Centre for European Reform (Tilford and Whyte 2009). Countries are classified in relation to five issues: innovation, liberalisation, enterprise, employment and social inclusion and

sustainable development. Good performers are labelled 'heroes' and the worst performers are labelled 'villains'. There is also a Lisbon league table ranking countries on the overall Lisbon performance.

CONCLUSIONS

Policy making is a very complex process in the European Union due to a number of factors, including multi-level implementation, the large number of member states and their very diverse interests. Problems resulting from the traditional community method explain why member states avoid further delegation of sovereignty and prefer a nonbinding tool such as the OMC, the use of weasel words and the softening of the consequences of binding decisions. However, the present financial crisis has revealed the difficulties of the European Union to control the frequent compulsion of member states and politicians to free ride, and made evident that there is large preference heterogeneity among member states which may be difficult to reconcile with European priorities.

The theory of differentiated integration is useful to understand how policy gets 'done' in the European Union, which requires the involvement of multiple reference points located at different levels and beyond the European Union, and emphasises national and institutional discretionary decision-making and practices that affect patterns of differentiated integration (Veiga et al. 2015). Discretionary aspects associated with policy enactment underline how national agendas and academic cultures are influenced by their own dynamics and disciplinary values (Veiga et al. 2015). The perceptions of institutional actors vary, depending on their institutional position, from academics in the central management of higher education institutions to the administrative and management staff (Veiga and Neave 2015). As argued elsewhere, the national appropriation of the Bologna Process (Chap. 3) and its interpretation by academics, students and administrative and management staff play a crucial role, acting as institutional mediators of differentiated integration.

The principal-agent theory is useful to understand the problems raised by the delegation of national sovereignty in the European Commission. The combination of multiple principals and large preference heterogeneity makes the control of the agent's activities more problematic and helps to explain the creeping power of the Commission. It will be interesting to observe how far the present economic crisis and the leading role assumed by the French-German couple may change this situation by shifting the balance of power away from the Commission.

The way European legislation and treaties are drafted using very ambiguous language open to diverse interpretations has reinforced the role of the ECJ that in general upholds the neo-liberal views of the Commission and frequently undermines the attempts of the member states to soften policies by creating the possibility of diverse interpretations at multiple implementation levels.

The implementation of the Lisbon strategy has created the need for convergence in areas protected by the subsidiarity principle. To avoid further agency losses and to counteract the creeping competence of the Commission, the use of soft law under the guise of the OMC has become increasingly popular although it may create convergence difficulties. Some authors argue that 'the central aim of coordination is to encourage national reforms, convergence being seen as a side-effect rather than as an end in itself' (Biagi 2000: 159) or 'most coordination processes are aimed at initiating or facilitating reforms to be conducted at the national level' (Dehousse 2002: 10). However, the results of using the OMC apparently confirm the idea that soft law mechanisms are capable of producing change, although coordination and convergence can be a problem.

At last, the European Commission has also been able to use to its advantage the extensive array of committees playing a role in policy implementation, those 'dense organisational structures that carry the education programmes' (Gornitzka 2009: 111). And by careful allocation of financial resources, the Commission helps in defining the political agenda and setting new areas for intervention.

NOTE

1. In the European Council, qualified majority means 55 % of member states, representing, at least, 65 % of the EU population.

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European Higher Education Policies

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of European policies as they bear directly on higher education, or which, in an indirect manner, have an impact on this sector. We aim to offer a broader picture of the higher education policy context in which the Bologna Process has unfolded, the place of the Bologna reforms within it and Bologna's relationship with this broader policy context.

Subsidiarity places education firmly under the competence of member states, and limits the Union's contribution to encouraging cooperation between states and to supporting and supplementing their action. Yet, the European Union has progressively extended its influence over the area of higher education. In the following, we look at the expanding remit and action of the European Union in the area of higher education with recourse to two instruments: legal and discursive. The jurisprudence of the ECJ is one factor that has contributed to this development. The Court's sentences on cases related to educational issues, such as access, fees or labour market—generally invoking the free movement associated with the internal market and European citizenship principles—have contributed to the construction of a European area of higher education in parallel with the Bologna Process. Here we offer the example of the Services Directive. Then, the communications issued by the European Commission are relevant in that they represent the main discursive vehicle

for setting out the Commission's vision for higher education as a driving force of the growth and development envisaged by the Lisbon strategy. Given the Commission's restricted capacity of statutory intervention, the communications stand as an exhortation and persuasion vehicle by which the Commission takes position and exerts influence on member states' higher education policies.

The Bologna Process is placed against the broader context outlined so far. There is one main reason for this. The issues it brought on the agenda marked continuity with the developments in higher education policy over the preceding two decades, as argued by Neave's Omega thesis (Neave 2009). Yet, its uniqueness resided in its emergence as an initiative among national governments and in its non-statutory nature (to be discussed in greater detail in Chap. 4). However, with the inclusion of the European Commission in the Bologna Follow-Up Group, with equal voting rights as the member states, the Bologna Process has been harnessed to serve the Commission's political agenda outlined in the Lisbon strategy. Ever since, the Commission has been wielding influence over the progress of the reforms. Thus, despite initial independence of the European Commission, the Bologna Process has become increasingly tied into the Commission's ambitions of European coordination and is viewed as an instrument to fulfil the more wide-ranging objectives of the Lisbon strategy.

European Institutions and Higher Education

The work programme Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) sets out the European Union's current objectives in education. This programme follows on from Education and Training 2010, the previous strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training. ET2020 provides common strategic objectives for member states: making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; and enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training. It also establishes principles for achieving these objectives, common working methods, and common benchmarks and indicators. These latter address key policy domains, one of which is the modernisation of higher education. Since 2004, the national reporting undertaken in the Bologna Process has fed into these benchmarks and indicators (Corbett 2011: 37).

The European Union cannot intervene directly in the higher education of its member states. The subsidiarity principle, which applies to education, is consecrated in the *Treaty of Lisbon* (2007), which came to consolidate the founding treaties of Europe, the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (1958) and the *Treaty of the European Union* (1992). The Treaty of Lisbon places education firmly under the member states' competence. It recognises their responsibility 'for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity'. Article 165 limits the Union's contribution to encouraging cooperation between member states and to supporting and supplementing their action, if necessary. It also explicitly excludes any harmonisation of the member states' laws and regulations in this domain. In areas covered by the subsidiarity principle, the Union's competence is 'to act only if and insofar as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level'. The European Union's role in education is thus legally restricted to political coordination, or facilitation of cooperation between member states in order to address common challenges. By catalysing joint coordinated effort towards their resolution, the added value of the Union's intervention should reside in concerted action, which is greater than the sum of individual nations' actions.

Brief Historical Perspective

Education and culture, as fundamental European assets, were left out from the European founding treaties. In the late 1960s, the omission 'appeared suddenly as an embarrassing oversight' (Neave 2005: 6). Further into the negotiations between the Commission and member states, a compromise was reached. The Commission put forward an Education Action Programme in 1976, but member states posed two conditions: harmonisation would not apply to education and member states retained responsibility for implementing the programme. According to Neave (2005), this exercise created 'lines of demarcation' between the responsibilities of nation-states and the European Economic Community, with education and culture within the jurisdiction of the former.

Although having no legal leverage over higher education, the European Commission gradually increased its purchase over this policy area. Neave (2005) advanced some explanations for the Commission's success in

shifting the balance of power in its favour: spiralling youth unemployment during the late 1970s; the crisis of the welfare state in the 1980s; the belief that, without closer links between universities and industry, Europe would lag behind in the knowledge society in a context of growing international competition from the US and Japan; and, most importantly, the realisation on the part of member states that national budgets could no longer accommodate higher education in the process of massification. These considerations triggered action on both fronts, national and European. In the late 1980s, member states initiated reforms of their higher education systems (e.g. in the UK, the Netherlands and Ireland) geared towards the vocationalisation of higher education, similar to the Commission's interpretation of higher education in economic terms, which was also upheld in the Gravier judgment of 1985 (European Court of Justice 1985). In parallel, the Commission launched the mobility programmes and research funding schemes, which enabled it to gain direct access to individual higher education institutions and thus 'mobilise' higher education. The balance of power, Neave argues (2005: 7), was altered. Higher education ceased being 'a reserved domain, sealed off from Brussels by the intermediary role of national agencies and ministries… [It] became an instrument of European policy, which ran parallel to national policy and bore directly on the institutional level'.

Here Neave pinpoints a paradox. Education was included in the activities of the Commission because education and culture were deemed essential for the identity and strength of Europe. Yet, the Commission's breakthrough occurred in an economic frame of reference, one in which higher education operated less as a cultural and more as a utilitarian institution in a 'market mode' (Neave 2005: 7). Still, the vocationalisation of higher education remained a contested matter. The Commission's explicit subordination of higher education to the economy, in *The Memorandum of Higher Education* (European Commission 1991), was met with harsh criticism from the higher education sector because of its vocational interpretation of the university (Neave 2005: 9–10). According to Corbett (2011: 40), this led to a change of strategy: the Commission reconceptualised its strategic goals around knowledge rather than the economy and initiated the development of a lifelong learning strategy. Knowledge was given constitutional status through its inclusion in the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, which stipulated the Community's duty 'to promote the development of the highest possible level of knowledge for their peoples through wide access to education, and through its continuous updating'.

The Commission then adopted the knowledge theme in its communication *Towards a Europe of Knowledge* (1997), which outlined intended community action in education and training and proposed 'an open and dynamic European education area to promote lifelong learning and the provision of competences'. Higher education was not specifically mentioned. According to Corbett, two factors revitalised the higher education policy agenda after the Lisbon European Council of 2000: the attention to research and innovation, and the inclusion of the Commission into the Bologna Process.

Jurisprudence and the Transfer of Power to the European Court of Justice

The rulings and case law of the ECJ have allowed European authorities to extend their competence over education. As we mentioned in Chap. 2, the ECJ stipulated in 1964 that the Community's common laws and regulations take precedence over the law of member states. European laws are often formulated in vague and ambiguous language, to accommodate the difficulty of reaching consensus among a large number of actors. In case of conflicting understandings, the final words belong to the ECJ. This transfer of legislative power and policy making from elected representative bodies to the courts—the *judicialisation* of politics—represents, according to Hirschl (2008), one of the most significant phenomena of the late 20th and early 21st century. Political power struggles, the interests of elites and other influential stakeholders, or clashes of worldviews and policy preferences are fertile terrain for its emergence (Hirschl 2008).

In the area of education, the ECJ has already developed a body of jurisprudence on issues related to access, quality or labour market needs (Kwikkers and van Wageningen 2012). The European Court's interpretations and decisions are almost always legally based on the market freedoms laid out in the European Union treaties: the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital (Fagforbundet 2008, 20). Thus, in passing its sentences, the ECJ has often invoked the free circulation of students and the European citizenship. One might argue that ECJ case law has contributed to the creation of a European area of higher education just as much as the Bologna Process (Kwikkers and van Wageningen 2012), although in a less visible or explicit manner. By way of example, the Services Directive is illustrative of judicialisation and of increasing European influence in education.

The Services Directive: The Erosion of National Competence in Higher Education Through Regulation

The Treaty of Lisbon contains provisions—at first sight innocuous for education—on the establishment of the internal market, 'an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured' (Article 26). Additionally, it reaffirms the principle of citizenship of the European Union and explicitly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of nationality (Article 18).

The Services Directive of 2006 intended to remove barriers to the free movement of services within the internal market of the European Union, regarding both their establishment in another member state and their provision without establishment. Member states were asked to revise their legislation to eliminate any discrimination between national and non-national service providers and any restrictions on the latter's freedom of movement and establishment. In the Commission's view, barrier removal would foster competition in cross-border service provision and economic growth, as envisaged by the Lisbon Strategy's ambition of turning Europe into the 'most dynamic and competitive area' in the world. Making up 70% of all production, the importance of the service sector in the free market could not be overlooked, according to a report by the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (Fagforbundet 2008). 'Services', in the meaning attributed by the treaty, imply that they are provided for remuneration and include, among others, activities of the professions (Article 57). According to the Commission, remunerated services in the area of training and education fall within the scope of the Directive (European Commission 2007a), which thus ultimately affects member states' ability to organise, control and regulate their education sectors.[1]

The Services Directive fails to clearly delimit its scope. While it distinguishes between *services of general economic interest* and *services of general interest*, and only applies to the former, the clarification on the distinction—based on the presence or absence of remuneration—is fuzzy. Member states have the right to define their national application of the two categories (European Commission 2004). In case of conflict, however, the ECJ has the ultimate word: 'whether a service which a member state considers to be of general interest is of an economic or non-economic nature has to be determined in the light of the case law of the European Court of Justice' (European Commission 2007a: 12). Therefore, a country that considers a certain service to be of general interest might have its choice

invalidated by the ECJ. What is at stake is the loss of national sovereignty. Vagueness appears convenient. The most uncertain classifications relate to 'individual welfare services in connection with education and childcare, healthcare and social services' (Fagforbundet 2008: 22). A concern was raised in this sense by the Norwegian Mission to the European Union in Brussels that the ECJ judgments have generated a 'grey zone' for public services and 'a feeling that national, regional and local authorities scope of action is being constantly eroded and narrowed down', while 'the European Court of Justice is to an ever-increasing extent shaping policy, because policy and the regulatory framework in this area have been vague' (Fagforbundet 2008: 20).

Education represents one of the services with greatest growth potential. The World Trade Organisation, a powerful proponent of the liberalisation of services, viewed health, education and water as the great future markets for international capital (Fagforbundet 2008: 10). The directive only considers education provided under the national education system as a service of general interest, thus outside its remit. The economic nature of the service (i.e. provided for remuneration) is essential for it to be covered by the directive. Recital 34 of the Directive preamble states:

> The European Court of Justice has recognised that the characteristic of remuneration is absent in the case of activities performed, for no consideration, by the State or on behalf of the State in the context of its duties in the social, cultural, educational and judicial fields, such as courses provided under the national education system... The payment of a fee by recipients, for example, a tuition or enrolment fee paid by students in order to make a certain contribution to the operating expenses of a system, does not in itself constitute remuneration because the service is still essentially financed by public funds.

According to the above statement, the amount of the contribution made by the recipient appears to determine whether an educational service is of general economic interest or of general interest, and consequently included or excluded from the Services Directive. Indeed, the ECJ has considered the size of their own contribution when determining the nature, economic or not, of a service (ETUCE 2006b). In this line of thinking, publicly financed education would logically fall out of the Directive's remit, while education mostly paid for by students and their families would fall within the scope of the directive. Organisations such as

the Norwegian Trade Union or the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) have, however, warned that the boundary was not clearly marked. ETUCE, for instance, has spoken of the difficulty of drawing a distinction between services of general interest and services of general economic interest, since in various EU member states there are private institutions receiving public funding, public institutions receiving private funding, and various kinds of public-private partnerships (ETUCE 2006c). In the case of higher education, the size of their own contribution criterion can lead to the classification of private educational services as services of general economic interest, thus falling within the scope of the directive. According to an analysis by ETUCE, private university courses have, in previous rulings by the ECJ, been considered services of general economic interest (ETUCE 2006a: 3). For ETUCE, the liberalisation of education boils down to a critical choice between market freedoms versus the quality and accessibility of education: should higher value be granted to 'the right to free trade in an open education market' or to 'member states' right to fully regulate their education sector with a view to securing high quality and equal access throughout life to its population?' (ETUCE 2006c).

So far, we have shown how Community law can indirectly increase the European Union's purchase over educational matters, in a rather ingenious manner. Vague concepts and obscure legal jargon invite interpretations by the ECJ. Ultimately this blurs boundaries between national and European authority, and impinges on member states' capacity to organise and regulate their education sectors.

European Commission's Communications: Discourse as a Policy Instrument

Another set of tools, which have shaped the higher education policy agenda and influenced reform, has been the European Commission's communications. They promote and make public the Commission's vision for higher education. Here we treat communications as policy instruments which rely on information. Vedung (1998) suggested a three-fold classification of policy instruments based on their degree of 'authoritative force': regulations, economic means and information; more colloquially, 'sticks, carrots and sermons'. Information (sermons) comes in the form of 'moral suasion' and includes 'attempts at influencing people through the transfer of knowledge, the communication of reasoned argument, and persuasion'.

Information is not to be understood exclusively as objective knowledge and facts; it also covers 'judgements about which phenomena are good or bad, and recommendations about how citizens should act and behave' (Vedung 1998: 33). Information as a policy instrument acquires relevance in the case of the European Commission because of the latter's reliance—in the absence of statutory means—on discourse, persuasion, official monitoring and benchmarking reports to generate desired change. Keeling (2006: 209) described the Commission's discourse on higher education as 'a widening pool of "common sense" understandings, roughly coherent lines of argument and "self-evident" statements of meaning about higher education in Europe'—all features indicative of its normalisation.

Since the Lisbon Strategy of 2000, the Commission has pursued its ambition of transforming Europe into 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world'. To this end, the advancement of the 'Europe of knowledge' was indispensable. The construction of the Europe of Knowledge rested on two pillars of separate origins: the European Research Area (ERA) as a European Commission research policy initiative and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as the key objective of the Bologna Process. The book's main focus is the Bologna Process, so European research policy lies beyond its remit. Nonetheless, the purposeful interlinking of the two by the Commission must be acknowledged. The blending of these two different policy areas generated a 'hybridised Bologna-research policy discourse', which quickly became a 'widely-accepted—even hegemonic—perspective for higher education at the European level' (Keeling 2006: 212). In the case of Bologna, interlinking is evident in the inclusion of doctoral degrees as the third cycle in the degree architecture in Berlin (2003) or in the commitment to improve synergies between ERA and Bologna in Bergen (2005).

The adoption of the Lisbon strategy, promoting the development of a knowledge-based economy, made higher education an essential ingredient of economic competition, thus opening the way to a closer link between the Bologna process and the Lisbon strategy (discussed in the next section). The vision for higher education promoted by the European Commission has been economically driven. Scholars have already pinpointed the lack of an integrated and coherent vision for higher education, which contemplated equally its economic, political, social and cultural role in Europe; instead of such a vision, economic objectives prevailed in the Commission's intervention in higher education policy (Keeling 2006; Maassen and Musselin 2009). A glimpse at the titles of the communications

on the topic of higher education suggests the leitmotif to be the modernisation of the sector, as a powerful contributor to the knowledge economy: *The role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge* (2003); *Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy* (2005); *Delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities: Education, Research and Innovation* (2006); and finally *Supporting growth and jobs—an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems* (2011).

The first communication (European Commission 2003) aimed to start a debate on the contribution of universities to the knowledge society and economy in Europe. Universities were seen as instrumental in the attainment of the target set in the Lisbon strategy:

> Europe needs excellence in its universities, to optimise the processes which underpin the knowledge society and meet the target, set out by the European Council in Lisbon, of becoming 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*. (European Commission 2003: 2, original emphasis)

The creation of the 'Europe of Knowledge', identified as the prime objective, was essential to ensure Europe's competitiveness in relation to other developed countries, particularly the US. Dale (2014: 16–17) purports that the Europe of knowledge represented 'a qualitative shift in the relationship between the EU and member states in ways that radically change some deep assumptions about the nature of higher education as a sector'. Higher education acquired crucial significance for two intertwined European-wide goals: the building of the new concept of Europe—'the Europe of knowledge'—and the pursuit of the knowledge-based economy of the Lisbon agenda. So although requiring efforts from 'a wide range of players', it was universities, 'situated at the crossroads of research, education and innovation' that 'in many respects hold the key to the knowledge economy and society' (p. 5). But, the communication lamented, these lacked competitiveness in an increasingly globalised environment. The document suggested the problem might lie in the mismatch between the responsibilities for higher education, which continued as national or regional, and the challenges facing it, which had become global. This warranted extension of action at the European level:

The nature and scale of the challenges linked to the future of the universities mean that these issues have to be addressed at European level. More specifically, they require a joint and coordinated endeavour by the Member States … backed up and supported by the European Union, in order to help to move towards a genuine Europe of knowledge. (p. 10)

As Dale (2014: 27) argued, the construction of the 'Europe of knowledge' is presented as an 'externally determined and driven project', the focus lying on responsibilities 'of and for Europe'. European universities needed an overhaul. The concern is Europe as a whole. For instance, one suggestion proposed to concentrate funding on identified areas of excellence in each country, because 'this type of policy would make it possible to obtain appropriate quality at national level in certain areas, while ensuring excellence at the European level' (European Commission 2003:18). Although raising the necessity of 'radical changes … to make the European system a genuine world reference'—related to resources, pursuit of excellence, and increased attractiveness—the communication remained general in scope.

Mobilising the brainpower of Europe (European Commission 2005) added further precision by introducing the modernisation agenda. Through this agenda, maintained in the subsequent communications, the Commission invited reform in areas which fell under member states' competence. At the core of the modernisation agenda lies three dimensions: quality and attractiveness; governance; and funding. In a critical tone, the document found universities wanting, 'not in a position to deliver their full potential contribution' to the Lisbon strategy. Two aspects are worth highlighting in this communication. First, although recognising the principle of subsidiarity (p. 3), the document got bold, authoritative and prescriptive in tone. For instance, member states were 'urged' to revise their regulatory frameworks. It also indicated what aspects such frameworks 'should' cover (e.g. multi-annual agreements between the state/region and each university, or setting out agreed strategic objectives). Member states were invited 'to ensure that fiscal rules enable and encourage partnerships between business and universities' (p. 10). Second, the communication presented a new concept of universities as an economic sector. Universities represented the 'knowledge industry' and, similar to the steel industry or agriculture, they needed revamping with the assistance of the EC:

Higher education is not just the sum of its education, training and research activities. It is also a fundamental economic and social sector in its own right, in need of resources for redeployment. The EU has supported the conversion process of sectors like the steel industry or agriculture; it now faces the imperative to modernise its "knowledge industry" and in particular its universities. (European Commission 2005: 10)

Then, at the informal meeting of the European Council, in Hampton Court in October 2005, the Commission was invited to identify areas for action on universities that can be used to drive forward the growth and jobs agenda of the Lisbon strategy. This resulted in a new communication of the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, entitled *Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research and Innovation* (2006), where the Commission urged the member states to increase the autonomy of higher education institutions, thus facilitating their competition in markets:

Universities will not become innovative and responsive to change unless they are given real autonomy and accountability… In return for being freed from overregulation and micro-management, universities should accept full institutional accountability to society at large for their results. (European Commission 2006)

In the public presentation of the communication, Ján Figel, commissioner in charge of education and training, said that 'Europe's higher education systems remain hampered by a number of obstacles, many of which are decades old. The Communication adopted today is a contribution to the debate on the necessary modernisation of EU's universities.' And the Science and Research Commissioner, Janez Potočnik, added:

Universities are powerhouses of knowledge generation. They will need to adapt to the demands of a global, knowledge-based economy, just as other sectors of society and economy have to adapt. The ideas we are putting forward today should help kick-start a debate among Member States, and also within universities themselves.

The Lisbon strategy shifted the focus from cooperation in higher education to global competition. In the document presented by the Commission to the Conference of the Ministers for Education in London, entitled

From Bergen to London: The contribution of the European Commission to the Bologna Process (May, 2007), it is stated:

> The European Commission aims to support Member States in their efforts to modernise higher education systems, in all their areas of activity making them more coherent, more flexible, and more responsive to the needs of society. Modernisation is needed in order to face the challenges of globalisation and to develop the skills and capacity of the European workforce to be innovative. Reforms should enable universities to play their role in the Europe of Knowledge and make a strong contribution to the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

The communications from 2006 and 2011 then went into finer detail regarding the road to modernisation, crystallised around curriculum, governance and funding. They pinpointed necessary changes (European Commission 2006) and, respectively, key issues (European Commission 2011) for the achievement of the modernisation agenda. Modernisation was 'acknowledged not only as a core condition for the success of the broader Lisbon Strategy, but as part of the wider move towards an increasingly global and knowledge-based economy' (European Commission 2006: 2). Knowledge stood 'at the heart of the Union's efforts for achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth', while universities were described as 'crucial partners in delivering the European Union's strategy to drive forward and maintain growth' (European Commission 2011: 2). Almost a decade after the first communication set off the debate about universities' role in the Europe of knowledge, these continued to fall short of expectations: 'the potential of European higher education institutions to fulfil their role in society and contribute to Europe's prosperity remains underexploited' (European Commission 2011: 2).

The changes (European Commission 2006) and key policy issues (European Commission 2011) highlighted in these statements—similar in coverage—aimed to strengthen higher education's contribution to the knowledge economy through: strengthening links with business; knowledge transfer infrastructures; strong emphasis on skills and competences for the labour market; or activation of knowledge in the society, as a main driver of economic growth. Additionally, faithful to the previous conceptualisation of higher education as 'the knowledge industry', the communications apparently invited treating higher education as any other economic sector to ensure its competitiveness. For instance, they advised

the application of competitive and outcome-based funding; increasing competition as the means of achieving excellence; granting autonomy and investing in professional management; or making the EHEA and ERA attractive and competitive worldwide. Indeed, as Grek (2010) noted, since 2000 the Commission's education policy-making tools have changed, with greater emphasis on indicators and benchmarking, to drive change and push the 'growth and jobs' agenda forward. Although recognising that it is not a 'direct actor in the modernisation of universities', the Commission described itself as a 'catalyst' by providing funding and political impetus, through the Open Method of Coordination and mutual policy learning (European Commission 2006: 11). Policy evidence, analysis and transparency were added as reform drivers in 2011. To this purpose, the communication announced the launch of U-Multirank, a new performance-based ranking and information tool for profiling higher education institutions. According to the communication:

> … it is essential to develop a wider range of analysis and information, covering all aspects of performance – to help students make informed study choices, to enable institutions to identify and develop their strengths, and to support policy-makers in their strategic choices on the reform of higher education systems. (European Commission 2011: 10, original emphasis)

These developments had a strong impact on universities by shifting the balance of their contract with society in favour of their economic role, while providing the Commission with an additional lever to intervene in European higher education policies despite the subsidiarity principle. However the Lisbon strategy did not work. Wim Kok's report was rather critical, already in 2004, about the results of the strategy:

> External events since 2000 have not helped achieving the objectives but the European Union and its Members States have clearly themselves contributed to slow progress by failing to act on much of the Lisbon strategy with sufficient urgency. This disappointing delivery is due to an overloaded agenda, poor coordination and conflicting priorities. Still, a key issue has been the lack of determined political action. (Wim Kok 2004: 6)

This failure of the Lisbon strategy was also recognised in the Commission's communication *Europe 2020* which defined a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth:

The recent economic crisis has no precedent in our generation. The steady gains in economic growth and job creation witnessed over the last decade have been wiped out – our GDP fell by 4% in 2009, our industrial production dropped back to the levels of the 1990s and 23 million people – or 10% of our active population – are now unemployed. The crisis has been a huge shock for millions of citizens and it has exposed some fundamental weaknesses of our economy. The crisis has also made the task of securing future economic growth much more difficult. (European Commission 2010: 7)

The communication also contained recommendations towards reinforcing the ties between higher education and the economy:

To reform national (and regional) R&D and innovation systems to foster excellence and smart specialization, reinforce cooperation between universities, research and business, implement joint programming and enhance cross-border co-operation in areas with EU value and adjust national funding procedures accordingly, to ensure the diffusion of technology across the EU territory. (European Commission 2010: 13)

The communications represent, therefore, a carrier of the Commission's vision and mission for higher education. The building of the Europe of knowledge and the knowledge society and economy are presented as arguments which warrant modernisation and the rethinking of higher education as a building block of the Europe of knowledge. Yet, knowledge as the new commodity is more than an imperative reason which warrants reform. It has become a policy instrument in itself. We assist to the emergence of knowledge politics: the generation and management of knowledge which increasingly determines the orientation of education policy (Grek 2010). Communications have assisted the Commission in becoming an authoritative agenda setter. As information and persuasion instruments—or sermons (Vedung 1998)—these helped to steer the course of reform. By way of example, in the context of Bologna, employability was undeniably an objective from the very beginning. Yet, it was only identified as a key priority area at the 2007 London ministerial conference. This might not be a mere coincidence. It came immediately after the Commission's exhortations for curricular revision attuned to labour market needs (European Commission 2005: 5) and for the inclusion of employment-related skills in university programmes (European Commission 2006: 6).

In the following, we turn our attention to the Bologna Process. Contrary to the initiatives discussed so far, its inception saw no involvement from

the European Commission. It arose as an intergovernmental policy initiative with the ultimate aim of establishing the EHEA. The remainder of this chapter considers briefly the relationship between the Bologna Process and the wider policy context shaped by the European Commission. The intricacies of policy making and implementation within the framework of the Process, derived from its unique characteristics, will be discussed in detail in Chap. 4.

The Bologna Process at the Service of the Lisbon Strategy

The Bologna Process started in 1999 with the Bologna Declaration, a nonbinding voluntary agreement between the ministers of education of 29 European countries, extending beyond the then frontiers of the European Union. Ministers committed themselves to pursue reforms towards the establishment of the EHEA through convergence around a significant number of action lines (comparable degrees, transferable credits, quality assurance and so on). The main objectives addressed the employability and the mobility of students and the attractiveness of European higher education.

That education ministers were wary and on guard vis-à-vis the Commission's subordination of higher education to the economy (European Commission 1991) is evident in the formulation of the reform and the conceptualisation of the Europe of knowledge. The Sorbonne Declaration, which preceded the Bologna Declaration by one year, projected a vision of a cultural and social Europe: 'Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of knowledge'. This Europe of knowledge is different from the one in the Commission's understanding. According to the Bologna Declaration, it represents 'an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship' (Bologna Declaration 1999: 1). Neave (2005) astutely remarked on the relationship that the Bologna Declaration established between economic objectives (competitiveness) and the cultural dimension of the process, namely that a competitive Europe was the result of cultural viability, as well as its proof:

> The vitality and efficiency of any civilisation can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries. We need to ensure that the European

higher education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions. (Bologna Declaration 1999: 3–4)

Acknowledging that higher education served a higher purpose than economic utilitarianism, the Declaration 'signalled a very real departure' from Brussels' 'single-minded subordination of higher education to the vocational imperative' (Neave 2005: 13). Discourse was matched by action: The Commission was left out of the Bologna Process. Although it had participated in the drafting of the Bologna Declaration, the UK and French ministers were adamant that this was to be an intergovernmental process. The fact that it was political cooperation rather than formal European Union processes that kick-started the process gave Bologna a powerful initial boost (Corbett 2011).

Following the invitation to join the Bologna Follow-Up Group in 2001, the Commission's eventual integration in the formal structures of the Process gave it substantial buy-in over higher education. The Bologna Process was short of resources and was losing momentum (Corbett 2011), while the Commission possessed the funding and technical expertise to keep the process going. Martens and Wolf argue that the Commission was perceived as a necessary infrastructure and support element, 'like a coat hanger … something to hang the reform on' (2009: 89), therefore instrumental in the promotion of the Process and its goals. Many of the Bologna initiatives were already mainstreaming solutions previously developed by the European Commission (e.g. ECTS), while the latter provided incentives for cooperation and projects aligned with the Bologna objectives and funded national Bologna promoters, information activities and ministerial meetings (Keeling 2006). Additionally, the Commission aligned its own activities with the Bologna reforms. For example, in 2003 it adopted the complementary goals of transparency, recognition, credit transfer and quality assurance in its working document on the implementation of Education and Training 2010, and it promoted the new degree structure through the launching of Erasmus Mundus (Keeling 2006). The inclusion of the Commission in the Bologna Follow-Up Group set off a 'ping-pong' competition, between itself and the Bologna Process, over the leadership of the reform of European higher education (Corbett 2011).

Once accepted on equal footing with individual member states, the Commission determined to a large extent the direction of the reform. The Process became tied into its ambitions of European integration. For

example, the Commission presented mobility and the recognition of qualifications as key to accessing the benefits of European citizenship (Keeling 2006). The Bologna Process was also harnessed to serve the Commission's agenda of economic growth and international competitiveness outlined in the Lisbon strategy of 2000. The EHEA became a pillar in the construction of the Europe of knowledge. According to Corbett (2011), 2004 marked the turning point. The education ministers in the Council of the European Union accepted the Commission's proposal that the national reports drafted to demonstrate progress towards the EHEA targets should be integrated into the Education and Training 2010 work programme as indicators. A year later, the Commission created an expert group to coordinate ET2010 in the key policy area of modernising higher education, and Bologna take-up became a deliverable in the monitoring of the Lisbon follow-up (Gornitzka 2010). This signalled a new meaning of the Bologna Process as a means towards the modernisation of higher education, made very explicit in the European Commission's contribution to the London ministerial meeting (European Commission 2007b). For Martens and Wolf (2009: 92), the EU now has more 'options and responsibilities in the field of education policy due to the Bologna Process', a paradoxical development when considered against its initial exclusion.

That the Commission needed the Bologna Process as much as Bologna needed the Commission (Corbett 2011)—the mutual dependence relationship—is also evident in its communications. There are numerous references to the importance of the Bologna Process in the pursuit of the Lisbon strategy. The organisation of European higher education diversity within a more coherent and compatible European framework undertaken by the Bologna Process is seen as a condition not only for the readability, but also the competitiveness of European universities in Europe and the world (European Commission 2003: 5). Persisting recognition problems are seen from the same perspective of competitiveness, as 'preventing the universities from using their potential and resources efficiently and limiting their wider audience' (p. 20). The perception of the Bologna Process as an instrument which serves the modernisation agenda, the subordination of its panoply of reforms to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives and the Commission's clear intentions to capitalize upon its impetus are evident in its 2005 communication. For example, it argues:

> The main directions for the modernisation of universities in Europe have been identified. Ministers will refine them at their upcoming meeting in

Bergen within the Bologna Process. Within the Lisbon Strategy, the priority must now be on immediate action consisting in a mix of university initiative, national enabling action and European support. (European Commission 2006: 9)

The overlap between Bologna and Lisbon is also obvious in that the key policy issues outlined in 2011 for consideration by member states and higher education institutions towards modernisation (European Commission 2011: 7) include action lines which have been promoted by the Bologna Process (e.g. building mobility more systematically into curricula and elimination of barriers, or recognition of credits gained abroad through use of ECTS, Diploma Supplement and the European Qualifications Framework).

Conclusions

This chapter has placed the Bologna Process in context. Bologna cannot be viewed in isolation, cut off from the broader policy scene at European or, indeed, global level. It did not arise in a policy vacuum. Instead, it marked continuity with the reforms already initiated in some European countries since the early 1980s, when the neo-Keynesian consensus in higher education (Neave 2009) was dismantled in the face of budgetary restrictions. The assumption that countries used Bologna as an extension of their national policies, rather than national policies being a subset of the Bologna Process (Neave 2009), is pertinent here.

But countries were not the only ones to creatively use the Bologna Process to pursue their political intentions. In aiming to establish the EHEA, the Bologna Process extended the conception of Europe into a new domain, which until then had been an object of struggle for the European Union authorities, with mixed outcomes. The Process thus constituted a golden breakthrough for the Commission to pursue integration in the field of higher education. By proposing an attractive conception of Europe as 'economically powerful, internationally significant, with a well-educated, technologically innovative population that is open to working in the world' (Keeling 2006: 213), the Commission generated growing acceptance that the concept of Europe is fundamental to higher education. It also legitimised the Commission's involvement in higher education and played an important role in the discursive construction of higher education as an economic sector.

Thus, besides reflecting policy concerns at the national level, Bologna bears the imprint of European goals and policies. Corbett (2011: 50) pinpoints a paradox in the relationship between signatory countries and the EU institutions: intergovernmental structures, in carrying the political responsibility for the Bologna Process, are higher education's prime standard-setters at European level, while the European Union institutions make the case for a policy. In other words, while countries may set the agenda, European Union institutions are 'effective in changing the way a policy issue is perceived and then made concrete' (Corbett 2011: 50). This entails that national governments' room for manoeuvre in making policy becomes restricted and channelled by the frames provided by European-level instruments, whether legal (ECJ decisions) or discursive (communications). The EHEA, therefore, emerges and takes shape at the interface between national and European political drivers and ambitions—an aspect to borne in mind in the analysis of the effects of the Bologna Process in Portugal, as a case in point.

Note

1. Similarly, there are also interferences from the European Commission via the Directive 2005/36/EC on regulated professions, recently amended by the Directive 2013/55/EC, which establishes a system of recognition of professional qualifications in the European Union.

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Bologna Process Implementation Problems

INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the implementation problems of the Bologna Process in relation to the steering mechanisms based on the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). In areas such as education, which the European treaties have reserved for the legal command of national authorities, the subsidiarity principle, the traditional 'Community method' of passing European legislation, cannot be used and it is necessary to resort to a soft law approach such as the open method of coordination. This was the case of the Bologna Process, which was an initiative of European governments, and where the inclusion of non-member states was an additional impediment for using the community method (de la Porte 2002; Dehousse 2002; Borras and Jacobsson 2004; de la Porte and Nanz 2004; Goetschy 2004; Gornitzka 2007).

As we showed in Chap. 2, the OMC is an instrument of the Lisbon strategy and is employed in areas of member states' competence (e.g., employment, social protection, social inclusion, education, youth and training). The OMC involves soft law measures based on voluntary binding arrangements rather than on regulations, directives or decisions (e.g., hard law). The Council defines objectives, establishes instruments to measure performance based on indicators, statistics and guidelines and promotes benchmarking activities monitored by the European Commission. The method also places the European Commission high on the programme.

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The European Commission makes proposals on European guidelines and on indicators, organises the exchange of best practice, and supports peer review. In the Conclusions of the European Council (2000), it is argued that the OMC provided 'the means of spreading best practices and achieving greater convergence towards the main EU goals' (European Council 2000).

The governance turn also needs to be taken into account. Since the 1990s governance has assumed a central position with regard to governing in public policies (Kjaer 2010a, b; Osborne 2010; Rosenau and Czempiel 1992; Salamon 2002). Approaches such as New Public Management, New Governance and New Public Governance are often pointed out as illustrations of the shift from governing to governance. According to Rhodes, governance is about managing networks, which 'are made up of organisations which need to exchange resources (for example, money, information, expertise) to achieve their objectives, to maximise their influence over outcomes, and to avoid becoming dependent on other players in the game' (Rhodes 1996: 658). This notion pervades the 2001 European Commission White Paper on Governance. The White Paper's proposals focused, first, on renewing Community procedures by following a less 'top-down' approach and fleshing out its policy tools with nonlegislative instruments, and, second, on the effective enforcement of Community law. While the Lisbon agenda corresponds to a strategic objective of the Union, the Commission envisaged the reform of European governance as a strategic objective of institutional overhaul supposedly to allow better steering of networks. This also affects the member states.

The appropriation of the Bologna Process by the Lisbon strategy agenda (Gornitzka 2007; Veiga and Amaral 2009a, b) has made clearer the use of soft law mechanisms in the implementation of Bologna (Capano and Piattoni 2011). Capano and Piattoni, writing in the *Journal of European Public Policy*, noted that Lisbon's 'governance architecture' 'has effectively led governments not only to reform their higher education systems, but also to interact with multiple stakeholders in a co-ordinated and communicative manner, in such way as to consolidate and routinise the Lisbon "script"' (Capano and Piattoni 2011: 601). They also argued that 'the "Lisbonisation" of higher education has had diverse, unclear results in terms of policy implementation, within national policy arenas' (Capano and Piattoni 2011: 601). The crux of the matter is that the Lisbon's 'governance architecture' has been successful in creating a common grammar (Magalhães et al. 2013) for producing changes, but not necessarily in

producing the envisaged policy outcomes. Policy outcomes entail deeper transformation of national higher education systems (Capano and Piattoni 2011). As decentralised policy actors are engaged with European policy making and its implementation (Tömmel and Verdun 2009), the embeddedness of Bologna by higher education institutions depends on their constituencies that have the power to translate ambition into practice (Veiga and Neave 2015).

In this chapter, we analyse the implementation problems which result from resorting to soft law mechanisms, starting with a discussion on the meanings of policy implementation. An important question will be to understand how far soft law methodologies, even when adequate to foster change, are adequate to ensure convergence and embeddedness of policy implementation and coordination, as there are successive levels (national, regional, institutional, etc.) with influence on the dynamic process of structural change. This is particularly relevant in the case of the Bologna Process as the implementation ultimately depends on the activity of autonomous institutions—the higher education institutions—where traditionally academic freedom does not allow for the direct top-down command of the central administration.

Is Implementation a Problem?

In the last fifteen years the European Union's concern with the political coordination of the higher education sector has increased. The development of a European Union system of governance 'is the result of a process guided by the logic and practice of differentiated integration' (De Neve 2007: 504). This brings to the fore a multi-layered system of decision-making responsible for enacting and stocktaking of the processes and, simultaneously, persuading relevant policy actors at the national and subnational levels to coordinate the achievement of European Union policy goals.

In relation to the OMC, the difficulty in coordinating common policies towards the EHEA is explained by Bologna appearing 'to amount to nothing less than a "ends/means reversal"' (Neave and Veiga 2013: 74). Bologna is itself viewed as an end, rather than as a means, towards the EHEA as the end result. As a consequence, what appears to be a difficulty in coordinating common policies towards the EHEA is explained, at least partly, by this ends/means reversal that undermines policy coordination. Increasing diversity of interests and diverging expectations of actors placed

at various levels and the ends/means reversal in the use of Bologna contribute to *rewrite* the Bologna policy. In this process, institutions placed at different levels of analysis develop as *shapers* and *takers* (Börzel 2003) of education policies with implications for policy analysis. Research has mobilised several models to analyse these processes, including multi-level analysis (Bache 2008; Beukel 2001; Hooghe and Marks 2001; Kaiser and Prange 2004; Manouvelos 2011; Scharpf 2001; Veiga and Amaral 2009a, b), the integrated differentiation (Andersen and Sitter 2006; Emmanouilidis 2007; Holzinger and Schimmelfennig 2012; Kölliker 2001; Stubb 1996; Veiga et al. 2015), European governance (Kjaer 2010a, b; Magalhães et al. 2013), and the horizontal dynamic (Gornitzka 2010), not to mention the classic top-down approach, bottom-up and coalition framework (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999).

The role of institutions as *shapers* and *takers* (Börzel 2003) of policies challenges the issue of policy appropriation at different levels and the concept of policy implementation. The characteristics of national systems, the particularities of scientific areas and institutions, often associated with the concept of Exceptionalism,[1] are now mutating to make 'evident *failure* of a particular system to converge or, at a more charitable level, to do so with the same alacrity as others' (Neave and Amaral 2009: 14). Additionally, analysing institutional actors has proven relevant to understanding how the practices developed meet, or do not meet, the outlined policy objectives (Sin 2012c, 2014a; Sin and Manatos 2014; Veiga and Amaral 2009a, b; Veiga 2012; Neave and Veiga 2013; Veiga and Neave 2015) and how they produce unanticipated effects, sometimes even unwanted ones (Veiga and Neave 2015). This brings to the fore the relevance of micro-political processes.

It could be argued that if there is a problem with the implementation of Bologna, why should it matter? However, it does matter, firstly, because the Bologna Declaration set as the prime task of the process to establish the EHEA. And secondly, on a more conceptual ground, this process was to take the form of common practices, grounded on shared values and common assumptions underlying changes in the organisation of higher education systems.

Lascoumes and Galès (2007) argue that policy instruments influence the nature and results of policy. This has implications for the way the Bologna Process evolved, not as a means towards the EHEA, but as an end in itself, which in turn compounds the implementation of the reforms it proposed. This makes it difficult to grasp the implementation of Bologna.

Moreover, as policy implementation needs to be translated into necessary action for the achievement of a specific objective, the multi-level nature of the Bologna process increases the complexity of analysis.

What is the Meaning of Implementation?

The complexity of policy implementation in the Bologna Process requires a theoretical—methodological approach which overcomes the difficulties that follow from adopting a restricted perspective grounded on either a top-down or a bottom-up activity. Building on existing research into policy implementation (Pressman and Wildavsky 1984; Cerych and Sabatier 1986; Gornitzka et al. 2005a, b), perspectives such as the 'policy cycle' (Ball 2004; Bowe et al. 1992) are adequate (Veiga 2014), and, by focusing on interpretation and on the effects policy produces, contribute to develop a more dynamic perspective about the interaction between interpretation and the effects or outcomes of policies. Along these lines, the perspective of policy implementation processes is essentially that of policy enactment in the meaning of realising policy through practice (Ball 2004).

The policy implementation of Bologna is associated with the construct of multi-level governance system(s) through the articulation, interaction and coordination of processes of policy making and, especially, implementation of European policies at different scales or levels (Veiga et al. 2015; Veiga and Amaral 2009a, b, 2012; Veiga 2012; Amaral and Veiga 2012). This view assumes that policy implementation is best seen as part of a larger process that is occurring at different levels. Saunders (1986, in Trowler 2003) considers that policy is expressed in several situated practices, such as text production, rhetoric and the expression of project policy management at different levels (Community, national, institutional, and so on).

Different levels in higher education policy making—and very certainly so in the Bologna Process—shape the outcome in the form of countervailing legitimacies driving towards common objectives. Policy implementation cannot be seen as a linear process and, certainly, it cannot be presumed that policies 'move from government to objects of implementation unaffected by the road they travel' (Gornitzka et al. 2005b: 53). Policy implementation frequently implies re-design and adaptation of the original objectives and intentions in the meaning that implementation may be conceptualised as 'mutual adaptation and a learning process, and … as negotiation and interaction' (Gornitzka et al. 2005b: 45).

The relationship between the Bologna Process and its main political goal—the establishment of the EHEA—is enlightened by the interpretations of actors in realising policy in and through practice (Veiga et al. 2015). Interaction (Gornitzka et al. 2005b; Veiga 2012, 2014) and iteration (Neave and Veiga 2013) are crucial to understanding the diversity of interests and diverging expectations of actors placed at various levels. Bologna, as a means to consolidate the EHEA, is a dynamic process of policy enactment (Veiga et al. 2015). In this sense, the EHEA is featured by significant differentiation and flexibility at the European, national and institutional levels, marked by the adoption of informal arrangements based on soft law mechanisms, such as the stocktaking processes. In this sense, a broader concept of policy implementation might allow us to capture the 'challenges involved with putting European Union policy into practice, and particularly informal opt-out and the discretionary aspects of transposition and implementation' (Andersen and Sitter 2006: 3).

The implementation of Bologna is about the development of practices that would promote the adoption of similar patterns aiming at convergence as its final product. But much also depends on the clarity of what is to be achieved, which is, as a rule, missing (Cerych and Sabatier 1986). As we have seen in previous chapters, to mask the frequent incapacity to reach consensus among all the member states, the European Union key policy statements often appear distressingly abstract, vague in nature, if not devoid of real substance—a characteristic qualified by recent scholarship as 'weasel words' (Amaral and Neave 2009a, b). Faced with such calculated imprecision, it is more necessary than ever to take closer scrutiny of the visions, diverse and particular, that the various decision-making levels—European, member state and institutional—associate with higher education. For despite the setting of an eleven-year deadline for completion—itself a curious faith in the linearity of cross-national decision-making—early research into the implementation of Bologna quickly revealed both the complexity of the interaction between levels (Sin 2012b, 2014b; Veiga and Amaral 2006, 2009a, b; Veiga 2012, 2014) and the reiterative nature of the bargaining process as it worked its way through those same decision-making levels (Neave and Veiga 2013). In short, the linearity assumed by the setting of schedules took little account of the crucial significance different actors' interests and views could bring to bear when putting policy into practice (Veiga and Neave 2015).

The proliferation of meanings that Bologna has assumed (Sin 2012a; Sin and Saunders 2014; Veiga 2010, 2012; Neave and Veiga 2013;

Veiga and Neave 2015) feeds and is fed by the flexibility that, since the beginning of the process, it was necessary to accommodate the diversity of national systems and political cultures of European countries (Veiga et al. 2015). The national appropriation of European policies (Musselin 2009) illustrates how the Bologna Process is realised in and through practice. From the perspective of integration, national institutions appear as executors of European policies (Neave and Amaral 2012), and the characteristics of national higher education systems emerge frequently as 'an illegitimate brake upon the drive by Europe towards a multinational system of higher education' (Neave and Amaral 2012: 15). These national brakes correspond to the enactment of national discretionary decisions and practices feeding differentiated integration (Veiga et al. 2015).

The diversity of interpretations is also intrinsically linked to how actors develop behaviours, attitudes and procedures at the institutional level, a dynamic process marked by the pedagogic recontextualisation made by higher education institutions and their actors (Sin 2015; Veiga and Amaral 2009b). Similarly, at national and European levels, the official recontextualisation field (Bernstein 2000), dominated by governments and supranational bodies (Veiga and Amaral 2009b), influence the process of translation of policy into practice. The official recontextualisation field refers to the *pays politique*, while the *pays réel* corresponds to the pedagogic recontextualisation field. The distinction between the *pays politique* and the *pays réel* was applied for the first time in the higher education field by Guy Neave (Neave 2002) as two different arenas of political action. The *pays politique* is dominated by the official field of political discourse (e.g., European Commission and national governments) and the *pays réel* is dominated by institutional dynamics and the pedagogical field (Neave and Veiga 2013).

The adoption of policies moving around principles (e.g., transparency, comparability, legibility and instruments such as the degree structure, the credit system or the Diploma Supplement) generates, from the perspective of differentiated integration, tensions between a temporary versus permanent project; territorial versus functional; differentiation at the national level versus multi-level differentiation; and EU decision-making versus club decision-making) (Veiga et al. 2015). Following Veiga et al. (2015), these tensions appear to underline how differentiated integration conditions enactment of decisions and practices that challenge policy implementation and the meaning of implementation itself.

As argued by Veiga and Neave (2015), the process itself is tied in with what may best be described as a basic assumption grounded in the notion of 'time coercion'. One may question the reasons that prompted setting the year 2010 for completing what was, without doubt, geographically the most extensive single reform that higher education in Europe has seen since its beginnings nine centuries ago. That in no way detracts, however, from the basic fact that Bologna is effectively a 'time coercive' process grounded in an explicit dateline and urged on by the commitment of governments to it. Still less can it be disputed that the concept of 'time coercion' stands as one of the salient, though less noticed, features that are an integral part of the Bologna agenda since its launching in 1999.

The Lisbon Strategy and the Adoption of OMC in the Bologna Process

The implementation of the Bologna Process has been steered by soft law-type mechanisms, including periodic meetings of ministers of education of the signatory countries to speed up the implementation pace and the setting-up of an administrative structure, the Bologna Follow-Up Group, to push forward implementation between ministerial conferences.

As we discussed in Chap. 3, the process was appropriated by the European Commission as a lever for enhancing the scope of the Lisbon strategy. Key to advancing the Lisbon agenda was the Commission's initiative in setting up a new policy implementation procedure, officially designated as the OMC. This procedure, which is alternatively described as being an example of 'soft law', lends itself to several interpretations: as a further channel for individual scholars, researchers and institutions to voluntarily engage in advancing European-level policy at the grass roots; as the application of 'networking' as an incremental and voluntary device to carry policy outlined at the European level down to the operational level; or, finally, as an indirect approach for the advancement of policy in the absence of a formal agreement to do so at the European level.

Drawing on so wide a range of tactical options, the OMC fulfilled a number of different functions in higher education policy making at the European level. Its prime aim, however, was to generate consensus in anticipation of future legislative initiatives. An alternative interpretation is to see the OMC as a device to maintain a body of opinion favourable to policy in the making. This would be necessary when, for various reasons, legislative action could not be envisaged for the moment, given the views held amongst the public generally or because the mandate of the central

agency, which seeks to advance down such a road, falls short of being able to enforce it by formal, legal means. It remains unclear how far 'networking' also acts as a 'work round' of the principles of transparency and accountability to the public (Amaral and Neave 2009b: 82–99).

Under the Commission's impulse, the OMC also flowed into the Bologna Process, giving more consistency to the soft law devices being used. The presence of OMC was particularly visible in the techniques used to evaluate 'good practice' (Veiga and Amaral 2006, 2009a, b), principally those practices which are regulated by legislation and guidelines passed at national level, the better to ensure their compatibility with the overall goals set out under the framework of the EHEA. Infiltrating the OMC procedures from the Lisbon agenda into the Bologna Process to inject a new stimulus to meet the latter's objectives, formally scheduled for completion by the year 2010, once again raised tensions between the Commission and member states, as well as considerable concern among the supporters of Bologna. Whilst the former again summoned the range of the Commission's competences creeping forward, the fears of the latter focused very specifically on the relationship between Bologna and Lisbon as vehicles of policy. In essence, the disagreement was not new, however the context to which it applied was. The main implication was, that by making the EHEA less a self-standing objective and more a subordinate element within the Lisbon strategy, the Commission promoted the policy appropriation of Bologna, which, as we saw in Chap. 3, increased its purchase over the European higher education policies.

Education Policies: Soft Law and Coordination Problems

We discussed in Chap. 2 how the European Union has increasingly been using soft law instruments in matters of national political sensitivity. Although the OMC has allowed the European Union to operate in areas that were previously considered the preserve of the member states (Dehousse 2002: 6), there is a price to pay, since the open method of coordination is too weak to guarantee efficient policy coordination (ibid.: 15).

It is interesting to compare the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) policy implementation methods with those of the European Union's OMC. Hemerijck and Visser (2003) compared the OECD's Job Study and the European Union's Employment Strategy, both aiming at improving the poor employment performance of member states in the late 1990s. But they embody quite different mimicking strategies,

conditions and procedures, with varying consequences for domestic learning and reform (2003: 29). The OECD hires country specialists to prepare and examine their own data on policies, outputs and outcomes and the report can be finished almost 'without the co-operation of member states, though publication is in general preceded by tough negotiations with national officials' (ibid.: 39). The European Employment Strategy relies on cooperation from the member states, even for data collection (the national action plans) and the organisation of peer review (Elmeskov 1998). Therefore, the OECD reports may induce the perception that undertaking reform involves conflict with policy objectives concerning equity and social cohesion (Elmeskov 1998). Hemerijck and Visser argue:

> [The EES] is therefore more contextualised by domestic concerns. While the OECD's learning from others tells how it should be, learning with others in the EES tells what is feasible. (Hemerijck and Visser 2003: 39)

As these soft law procedures lack the enforcing power of hard law, it is questionable how far they can produce results when compared to other (less or more) formalised forms of coordination in complex, multi-level, and functionally-interdependent governance systems (Borras and Jacobsson 2004). Zeitlin (2005: 17) states that some authors are strongly critical of the OMC's 'alleged lack of substantive impact on the member states'. According to this view, the OMC in its present form amounts to little more than the European emperor's 'newest clothes'. However, Zeitlin opposes that view by arguing that there is now enough evidence, at least in areas such as employment and social policy, to illustrate substantive political change that has contributed not only to 'broad shifts in national political thinking' but also 'to specific changes in individual Member States' policies' (Zeitlin 2005: 20). Hemerijck (2002) also recognises some convergence of employment and social policy objectives, which might be the result of common concerns over social polarisation. And, in the case of Bologna, there has been considerable change in all the higher education systems of the signatory countries, although it is difficult to discern the direction of change and its implications for achieving the EHEA.

Therefore, soft law procedures, despite some obvious weaknesses, might produce visible results under difficult conditions. A possible explanation is that, although soft law mechanisms are not efficient for strict coordination, they are quite capable of inducing change. This is the case of the OMC which

> also suffers from a problem of endemic tension … by mixing elements of competition, diversity against convergence and policy implementation at the State's own pace against a timeframe for convergence to EU goals. Even more dramatic is the increasing tension created between the advocates of the priority of competitiveness and the advocates of a 'social Europe' by the Lisbon strategy (to become the most competitive knowledge led society in the world). (Veiga and Amaral 2006: 292–293)

Indeed, 'most coordination processes are aimed at initiating or facilitating reforms to be conducted at the national level' (Dehousse 2002: 10), eventual convergence being a by-product rather than an end in itself. The intended convergence is not of institutions and concrete solutions but of objectives and performances (Netherlands Council for Social Development 2004). Therefore, it is not surprising that the draft executive summary of the Trends V report refers to a large number of implementation problems and inconsistencies at local level (Crosier et al. 2007).

The Commission considered Bologna as a 'platform to discuss education and training policies at European level', offering 'the opportunity to build a coherent policy framework without impinging on national competences' (European Commission 2006: 7). The establishment of coherent policy frameworks needs to be based on accurate information (Kok 2004), a goal that the Bologna instruments have not seemed capable of achieving. Apparently, the used benchmarks do not provide a clear picture of reality and the stocktaking exercise does not measure real progress (Veiga and Amaral 2009a, b), either because benchmarks are not well chosen or because ministers tend to present optimistic views of national achievements to 'keep up with the European Jones" (Gornitzka 2005). The second problem is that stocktaking has mainly been based on implementation at national level that has overvalued the passing of legislation, apparently assuming a naïve faith in the linearity of policy implementation.

Until very recently, most of the reports that dealt with implementing the Bologna Process projected a vision of unlimited success and portrayed a march, resolute, relentless and glorious, towards the objectives set for 2010 (Neave and Amaral 2008). Reports, though riddled with more than the usual number of weasel words, were an unstinting paean to the converging efforts of governments, institutions and academics, although the latter had rarely enjoyed any contact, let alone close or intimate, with the machinery of implementation.

The first references to implementation problems of the Bologna Process were made in the 2007 Trends V report , which was prepared by the European University Association for the 2007 London Ministerial Conference, and included, for the first time, questionnaires and interviews at institutional level. For the first time in a saga of some eight years maturing, a critical assessment of the state of the Bologna Process appeared. It set out a number of problems. The report referred to employment difficulties of the new Bologna graduates, incorrect or superficial use of the European Credit System, low implementation of the Diploma Supplement, confusion and lack of action over national qualifications frameworks, the ever-present disincentives to student mobility and difficulties with recognition of periods of study in other institutions. Such warnings provided further evidence for the critical analysis, which allowed Neave (2004: 5) to draw a clear distinction

> between 'the *pays politique*' and the '*pays reel*' – between the world where policy is a matter of intention and statement – hortatory, uplifting or even recriminatory – and the world where statements are made action, in the shape of programmes duly curtailed, reoriented towards 'employability', involving 'readability' of qualifications for employers and attractiveness to our students and to foreigners.

The 2010 report, *The Bologna Process Independent Assessment*, recognised there is a 'large difference in the speed of implementation by individual countries' creating a 'European Higher Education Area of different speeds of implementation and varying levels of commitment' (CHEPS and INCHER-Kassel and ECOTEC consortium 2010: 6). The report also argued that, due to different starting points and different management and governance arrangements, 'the implementation of national reforms deviated from Bologna intentions' (ibid.), divergence being amplified as different key actors at different levels of the process 'interpreted elements of the Bologna reform agenda differently' (ibid.).

The 2010 ESU report also referred to a number of problems, such as lack of financial support for mobility, lack of recognition of studies abroad, superficial implementation of ECTS, difficult implementation of national qualifications frameworks and growing number of unemployed bachelor graduates. It recognised that there were different paces of implementation of the process, which would fundamentally endanger the vision of a common EHEA (ESU 2010: 9).

However, the most fascinating demonstration that the implementation of Bologna has been riddled with difficulties comes from the recent 2015

Yerevan Communiqué. This meeting of the ministers of education took place in 2015, just five years after the implementation of Bologna was declared complete. Ministers recognised that the implementation of the structural reforms had been uneven and the tools were sometimes used incorrectly or superficially. They defined their priorities as follows:

> By 2020 we are determined to achieve an EHEA where our common goals are implemented in all member countries to ensure trust in each other's higher education systems; where automatic recognition of qualifications has become a reality so that students and graduates can move easily throughout it. (Yerevan Communiqué 2015)

Therefore, at least for the first decade of the Bologna Process, its implementation lived off the notion of successful progress towards its final objectives, without reflection on the inconsistencies or the unintended effects its progress might produce. Reports were in general uncritical, presenting results in a triumphal mode, while implementation difficulties at local level were ignored as they might have distracted from the ultimate objective of shaping the EHEA, whatever that shape may be. However, the final configuration of EHEA depends on the aggregate results of the reforms of national higher education systems and not so much on the communication flow the policy implementation tools provide.

For Hemerijck (2002: 42), 'a final concern is how much diversity in welfare design, institutional structure, and problem loads that OMC can tolerate'. Does the same concern apply to the implementation of the Bologna Process? The draft executive summary of the 2007 Trends report showed that there was apparent willingness to accept a 'soft' notion of convergence even if at the expense of some of the initial objectives of the Bologna Declaration.

CONCLUSIONS

Both the implementation of the Bologna Process and of the Lisbon strategy share the common use of soft law tools rather than the traditional method of European legislation. This method leaves implementation to the member states, fully respecting the principle of subsidiarity. For politicians, it has the advantage of allowing governments to shift the blame of unpopular domestic agendas to the OMC processes or the EU (Zeitlin 2005; Mosher 2000; Schäfer 2002). There is no doubt that the Bologna Process has resulted in important changes in European national higher

education systems, converging to a common degree structure. However, a more detailed analysis has revealed substantial lack of convergence towards the endorsement of the EHEA, as has been repeatedly recognised during the ministerial conferences.

Some authors argue that 'the central aim of coordination is to encourage national reforms, convergence being seen as a side-effect rather than as an end in itself' (Biagi 2000: 159) or 'most coordination processes are aimed at initiating or facilitating reforms to be conducted at the national level' (Dehousse 2002: 10). These results confirm the idea that soft law mechanisms are capable of producing change, although coordination and convergence can be a problem. Only an analysis of the detailed implementation of the Bologna Process at institutional level can provide a decisive test of its 'embeddedness', that is, whether 'the key features of Bologna are durably set in practice or are simply taken on as lip service' (Neave 2005: 16). A similar demurral was voiced by the Netherlands Council for Social Development (2004: 5) *a propos* the use of the OMC as an instrument for Europeanisation, namely 'the extent to which OMC processes can be embedded or mainstreamed within domestic institutional contexts which essentially is a question of the Europeanization of domestic structures'.

The establishment of the EHEA, based on incentive measures promoted by the European Union, while relying on soft law methodologies, reveals problems of coordination with regard to the levels influencing the process of structural change. Comparison between states, allowing for 'naming and shaming' of laggards, induces the enactment of the EHEA and brings to the fore the relationship between European, national and institutional agendas. There is evidence of decisions and practices of differentiated integration resulting from the enactment of the EHEA, such as the different national rules and norms to handle the academic recognition of periods of study abroad (Veiga et al. 2015) or different national legal requirements for degrees (Sin 2013).

Amaral and Neave (2009a, b) refer to a permanent tension between the activities of the Commission ensuring its creeping competence through the network of European administrative structures and committees (Gornitzka 2009), and the member states meddling with their national agendas 'with their own logic and purpose, contributing to the persistence of old, and the emergence of new, variations across and within systems' (Enders and De Boer 2009). Nothing indicates that the final outcome of the Bologna Process will be a converged EHEA, 'unless, that is, "convergence" takes on the quality of a new weasel word and by so doing confirms the intense creativity of weasels in the bestiary of Bruxelles!' (Amaral and Neave 2009a, b: 284)

In conclusion, it is time to reset our research objectives away from Bologna, analysed as a multi-level political process and which, so far, have centred mainly at the European and nation-state levels, and to more closely scrutinise implementation at the institutional level. With the announcements that it is time to start thinking of a Bologna beyond 2010, this modest proposal is not devoid of justification.

Note

1. Exceptionalism is no longer taken to be the particular manifestation of national identity conveyed through and by higher education. On the contrary, the label now serves to point the finger at 'The Odd Man out', to single out on the European Parade Ground the notorious members in higher education's equivalent of the 'Awkward Squad' (Neave and Amaral, 2012: 15).

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Bologna Objectives and Their Fulfilment

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the European agenda driving policy change in higher education. The central political purpose of the EHEA, as expressed in the Bologna Declaration, was to ensure greater compatibility and comparability between European higher education systems through the fulfilment of the three overarching objectives of the Bologna Process: mobility, employability and international attractiveness of European higher education. Under this framework, the intergovernmental decisions within the Bologna Process were coupled with European Union initiatives focusing on instruments for launching the Process. In actual fact, unravelling the promotion of mobility, employability and attractiveness and setting them apart from the Commission's earlier education policies is no easy task (Corbett 2005). These overall policy objectives were to be fulfilled as education standards and criteria converged as a subsequent outcome of the implementation process.

The Bologna Declaration set out a number of action lines: adoption of a system of readable and comparable degrees; adoption of a system based on two cycles; establishment of a credit system; promotion of mobility; advancement of European cooperation in quality assurance; and promotion of a European dimension of higher education. The Declaration also established an important relationship with the economy, as it considered that 'the degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification'.

After signing the Bologna Declaration, the ministers decided to create a follow-up structure—Bologna Follow-up Group—to prepare the future ministerial conferences and coordinate the action needed to advance the goals of the Bologna Declaration. At the next meeting, in Prague (2001), the ministers emphasised lifelong learning, participation of students and promotion of attractiveness. The Berlin Communiqué (2003) introduced the doctoral level as the third cycle, recognition procedures based on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement, while quality assurance based on accreditation systems aimed at dispelling doubts about educational standards across Bologna signatory countries. In Bergen (2005) new priorities were added: the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, implementation of joint degrees up to doctorate level and recognition of prior learning. At the London meeting (2007) new areas of action were included: improvements to data collection and a stocktaking exercise focusing on the development of national qualifications framework, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and recognition of prior learning. At their Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve (2009) meeting, for the first time, ministers declared student-centred learning a priority. They addressed the teaching mission of universities, funding, education, research and innovation. In 2010, the ministers met in Budapest and Vienna to launch the EHEA as envisaged in the 1999 Bologna Declaration. The Budapest-Vienna Declaration reaffirmed the commitment to the full and proper implementation of the agreed objectives and set the agenda for the next decade. Ministers also noted the need to involve key actors at the institutional level. In Bucharest, in 2012, ministers reinforced the need to provide quality higher education for all, enhance employability and mobility and improve data collection. At the most recent meeting in Yerevan, in 2015, ministers underlined the quality and relevance of learning and teaching and assumed the achievement of structural reforms as a prerequisite for the consolidation of the EHEA and, in the long run, for its success.

The agenda of the Bologna Process grew equally in quantity, emphasis and refinement. The commitments of the ministerial conferences included topics as diverse as mobility of students and staff, a common degree structure, the social dimension, lifelong learning, a European system of credits, quality assurance and the development of Europe as an attractive knowledge region. Some have suggested, however, that such proliferation of objectives served merely to sustain the impression of progress and of implementation successfully executed (Neave and Amaral 2008).

However, in 2015, five years after the deadline fixed in 2010, the full success of the EHEA still seems problematic. Given the moving targets in the previous decade and, most importantly, the fact that 'the reform focus has been considerably broadened' (Maassen and Stensaker 2011: 760), one might argue that the accomplishment of the objectives of improving mobility, enhancing employability and raising the attractiveness of EHEA are still major challenges of European higher education. During the last fifteen years, several research studies have been developed and gathered data showing that the Bologna reforms have reached diverse configurations in the different European countries, pointing out that reforms have not fully met their convergence objectives (CHEPS and INCHER-Kassel and ECOTEC consortium 2010; Curaj et al. 2012; Kehm et al. 2009; Schomburg and Teichler 2011; Sin 2012; Veiga 2010; Veiga and Amaral 2009a, 2012; Witte 2006). At the European level, the ministers, while committed to completing the work initiated with the signature of the Bologna Declaration and recognising the need to give new impetus to cooperation, acknowledged that

> implementation of the structural reforms is uneven and the tools are some-times used incorrectly or in bureaucratic and superficial ways. Continuing improvement of our higher education systems and greater involvement of academic communities are necessary to achieve the full potential of the EHEA. (Yerevan Communiqué 2015)

The analysis of the fulfilment of the Bologna policy objectives must take into account both the dynamic nature of the European, national and institutional processes and the coordination efforts developed at these levels. In this chapter we argue that the objectives to be met are associated with the institutionalisation of the EHEA (Olsen 2001), manifest in the establishment of structures, routines, standards, shared meanings and allocation of resources (Veiga 2010). It is also necessary to consider that the interaction and coordination of European, national and institutional policies influence the fulfilment of political goals (Veiga 2012, 2014; Veiga et al. 2015).

On the basis of several reports (ESU 2015; European Commission/ EACEA/Eurydice 2015; Sursock 2015) prepared for the Yerevan ministers conference (2015), this chapter focuses on the analysis of the fulfilment of Bologna's key policy objectives, taking into account these two dimensions of its embeddedness: the development of policies towards

the institutionalisation of the EHEA and the interaction between different levels of political coordination.

Setting the Bologna Objectives and the EHEA

The concept of a 'Common European Home for Education' was first mentioned at the 1997 Warsaw meeting of the European Ministers' Conference as a way to strengthen cooperation in the fields of education and training to prepare for ten new member states joining the European Union (Marçal Grilo 2003). Countries of Central and Eastern Europe considered that it was politically relevant to show that they were ready for an economy based on the free market and prepared to make the adjustment required by shifting from a communist system to the capitalist system operating in Western Europe (Tomusk 2004). This means that the establishment of the EHEA was a strategic goal of the European Union already considered before the Bologna Declaration. For that reason, the setting up of the EHEA can be seen as aligned with the *Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community* (European Commission 1991), published in 1992 and promoting the preparation of member states 'for the forthcoming unification on the one hand, and on the issues posed by the wish of several countries to join the EC (European Community) on the other' (Wit and Verhoeven 2001: 197). The enhancement of European cooperation in education and training in anticipation of the accession to the European Union of Central and Eastern European countries in 2004 and 2007 was an important driver for the idea of establishing the EHEA. Clearly, the origins of the EHEA as a strategic initiative lie in intergovernmental discussions that sought additional leverage to lock higher education systems together around a 'European dimension' prior to the Bologna Declaration. Seen in this light, Bologna provided a platform for new member states to show their readiness to undertake adjustment of their systems of higher education prior to their formal accession.

The Sorbonne Declaration, signed in 1998 by France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom, saw the ministers of those states responsible for higher education committing themselves to the principle of progressive convergence operationalised around a common framework for degrees and cycles of study. The purpose of this common frame of reference was held out as improving external recognition, easing student mobility and bolstering employability.

The Bologna Declaration was signed one year later. At national levels, priorities to facilitate access to the labour market, efficiency and attractiveness were goals shared by all countries, which explains why the Bologna agenda has been well accepted by all countries and has had a widespread use in implementing change, despite its nonbinding nature. For Neave:

> the Bologna Declaration … served as a species of package deal, reflecting issues – employability, transparency and readability, etc. – already present on the agendas of most of the long-term Member States of the EU. (Neave 2009: 49)

Significantly, neither the Sorbonne Declaration nor initially the Bologna Declaration engaged European institutions,—in effect, the European Commission—thereby avoiding placing the Declaration under the jurisdiction of the ECJ, whose earlier interventions and interpretations of what constituted higher education had considerably extended the scope of the Commission in the general domain of higher education policy.

The mutation of the Bologna Declaration into the Bologna 'Process' was rendered evident by its evolution in function of the various two yearly ministerial meetings and by the issues they tackled. The transition from Declaration to Process was used for the political purpose of showing inevitable advance, success, vigour and vitality. Ministerial meetings are also useful pointers to the way more and more issues have been grafted on to the Bologna agenda, thereby translating it into a regular and permanent 'process'. Until 2009, it may be argued that the Bologna Process evolved as 'policy as a moving target' (Wittrock and de Leon 1985), unfolding to become not just a self-sustaining process, but to take on all the attributes of 'policy as a moving agenda' (Neave 2009). In 2015, ministers in the Yerevan Communiqué stated that 'by 2020 we are determined to achieve an EHEA where our common goals are implemented in all member countries to ensure trust in each other's higher education systems' (Yerevan Communiqué 2015), underlining the need to develop more effective policies for recognition of qualifications and mobility, and of prior learning. So far, the ambitious objectives pursued by the EHEA met little achievement in institutional practices streamlined by Bologna (see, for example, Moscati 2009; Neave and Veiga 2013; Rudder 2010; Vällima et al. 2006; Veiga 2012; Veiga and Amaral 2009b; Wastl-Walter and Wintzer 2012). One might expect that the Bologna reforms should establish the EHEA, if only for the fact that the Bologna Declaration explicitly set this as its prime

task. However, it remains to be seen how far the reforms have translated into the establishment of structures, routines, standards, shared meanings and allocation of resources.

Fulfilling Bologna Objectives and the EHEA

The setting up of the EHEA aims to secure comparability and compatibility among European higher education systems through interrelated policy objectives associated with a wide diversity of areas. In the following, we will focus upon the key objectives of the Bologna Process which were set at its very beginning: mobility, employability and attractiveness.

Within the Bologna Process, employability is understood as 'the ability to gain initial meaningful employment, or to become self-employed, to maintain employment and to be able to move around within the labour market' (Working Group on Employability 2009: 5). The role of higher education is 'to equip students with the knowledge, skills and competences that they need in the workplace and that employers require; and to ensure that people have more opportunities to maintain or renew those skills and attributes throughout their working lives' (Working Group on Employability 2009: 5).

Mobility of European students and staff and attraction of foreign students and academics were common practices well before the Bologna Process. In their earlier form, mobility programmes were joint initiatives of the European Commission and individual establishments of higher education (Huisman and van der Wende 2004), with less involvement of institutional mediation at national levels. With the development of the EHEA, they moved to centre stage.

The attractiveness of the EHEA is closely linked to the interpretation of student mobility. While mobility tended to be driven by educational and cultural rationales convening both the idea of cooperation and mutual trust in exchanging students among European higher education institutions, attractiveness has been driven by economic rationales and competition between higher education institutions for incoming (and in many cases paying) students. In this sense Bologna has, then, been promoting a shift in the interpretation of mobility by reflecting the idea of enhancement of attractiveness on the basis of economic rationales.

The instruments for promoting mobility, employability and attractiveness are crucial. These instruments were embedded in Bologna action lines, such as the three-cycle degree structure, credit system, Diploma

Supplement, quality assurance systems, qualifications frameworks and learning outcomes. We will look at the extent to which these instruments have contributed to the accomplishment of the three major objectives of the EHEA.

Mobility

The *European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report* (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015) states that there are no reliable data collection practices across the EHEA. In any case, the available numbers of incoming and outgoing students show the increase in mobility to vary by country. Since the 2012 Implementation Report, student mobility rates have shown only slight increases. Additionally, still only a minority of students benefit from such an experience and, therefore, mobility for under-represented groups would need greater attention (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015: 22).

When trying to explain these less successful achievements, one must look at the instruments in place to promote mobility. This is the case of the Bologna degree structure, which does not prove to be adequate in promoting mobility, especially in the case of first cycle students. Trends 2015 report recognises that:

> The haste with which three-cycle structures had been introduced in some countries – sometimes in response to a ministerial dictate that it be done within one year – did not always lead to meaningful curricular renewal, but rather to compressed Bachelor degrees that left little flexibility for students and little room for international mobility during the first cycle. (Sursock 2015: 69)

The European Students' Union also pointed out 'the lack of consistency in the length and/or number of ECTS credits for each cycle… For instance, some master's degrees are 60 credits, some 90 and some 120, which creates a major challenge for mobility and recognition of foreign qualifications' (ESU 2015: 56). This lack of consistency reveals an implementation of the Bologna degree structure based on formal compliance rather than on well-justified convergence.

Most importantly, the national specificities and assumptions about the quality of their own educational structures and training are pointed out as

a major drawback for mobility. As acknowledged by the *European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report*:

> … countries tend to consider that their own systems prepare students better for mobility than other systems. For example, countries generally consider that their outgoing students are better prepared for the linguistic challenges of studying abroad than are incoming students to their country. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015: 245)

The assumptions made by countries about the quality of their own higher education system are influential in the recognition of academic studies. Mobility relies on credit recognition and apparently the credit system is not evolving as a doorway towards a common understanding about measuring student workload. In actual fact, the results of the Trends 2015 questionnaire concerning credit recognition 'show that the institutions are doing their best to ensure a fair process but that this issue remains an enduring obstacle to mobility' (Sursock 2015: 12). The current situation where the use of the ECTS is frequently incorrect, bureaucratic and superficial does not facilitate comparability and compatibility and hinders mobility and recognition. The European Students' Union warns:

> In many cases, objections to the current implementation and usage of ECTS are related to an arbitrary system for allocating ECTS credits. Unions reported that the implementation was often superficial, where countries had simply translated the number of credits from their previous system to ECTS credits, sometimes by simply using a mathematical formula. (ESU 2015: 52)

These aspects reflect, on the one hand, the fact that the organisation of study programmes does not take into account the core need to develop common structures and to consolidate standards and shared meanings encouraging mobility. On the other hand, they reflect the shortcomings in the allocation of resources to mobility structures and processes. Actually, funding was perceived as the biggest obstacle to increase mobility as underlined by the *European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report* (2015) and by the ESU report (2015).

Last, but not least, to explain the only modest rise in student mobility in most countries, the financial and economic crisis is central and makes critical the issue of political coordination:

Funding is perceived by ministries and students alike as the biggest obstacle to increased mobility. The portability of financial student support is clearly one important measure to address this concern, but only a minority of countries currently ensure full portability for their students. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015: 23)

The *European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report* (2015) recognises the difficulty of political coordination of mobility at central level and recommends that this deficiency should be addressed in each country through the articulation of the countries' mobility strategies with those of internationalisation:

… countries have different starting points and have diverse situations regarding mobility, the ministers agreed, through the 2012 Mobility Strategy, that countries should develop and implement their own internationalisation and mobility strategies with their own 'measurable and realistic mobility targets'. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015: 226)

To boost student mobility, countries and institutions are asked to persist in their internationalisation strategies. This ignores the fact that mobility is not a mere means of internationalisation and that internationalisation strategies are influenced by the economic implications of the Lisbon agenda. The recommendation to integrate mobility in internationalisation strategies requires, in turn, the development of control mechanisms to monitor the performance of countries and institutions, which implies

… investing in information services, monitoring experience, ensuring that recognition and evaluation processes operate fairly, and making changes in light of experience. Improved monitoring of the impact of measures taken to remove obstacles to mobility will also be crucial if optimal mobility flows are to be achieved. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015: 265)

This focus on monitoring instruments underlines a pragmatic approach to the coordination of mobility in the EHEA in detriment of the major political values to be pursued through it. Mobility appears to be driven by instrumental concerns, making it a component of the internationalisation strategy, rather than being a principle and value of the EHEA. This challenges the possibility of the existence of broader national and institutional priorities and agendas in the area of mobility.

Employability

In the words of Maassen and Stansaker (2011), the Lisbon triangle of employment, growth and social cohesion brings forward research and 'education as a key element in social policy, labour market policy and overall economic policy' (Maassen and Stensaker 2011: 760). More recently, labour market and economic policies have gained even more relevance, as graduate employability has been constrained by the weak economic growth and the increase in youth unemployment observed in Europe. This situation 'prompted many governments, the European Commission and the OECD to emphasise the need for closer links between universities and industry, to stress innovation policies and graduate employability' (Sursock 2015: 23). As such, the promotion of employability is also a priority reflecting the new economic reality, 'whether it is about responding to the economic crisis, addressing high levels of youth unemployment rates, tackling the requirements of the knowledge society' (Sursock 2015: 23). As a result, employability is increasingly configured to respond to the economic agenda and, in Maassen and Stensaker's (2011) terms, it corresponds to 'a policy area where the reform focus has been considerably broadened' (Maassen and Stensaker 2011: 760), ascribing primacy to effective outcomes of higher education.

When looking at instruments for employability embedded in the Bologna action lines, the development of shared meanings associated with the establishment of learning outcomes or qualifications frameworks are key to understand the achievements in employability. The learning outcomes approach is pointed out by the Trends 2015 report as an important vehicle for the promotion of readability of diplomas and their circulation across Europe:

> The learning outcome approach has also been an essential part of the discussion about graduates' employability to the extent that learning outcomes include their individual characteristics (knowledge, skills and competences). The European and national qualifications frameworks have been devised to provide information about these forms of knowledge, skills and competences at different levels of higher education. (Sursock 2015: 77)

This report also underlines the implementation of learning outcomes as a promising success:

> Given the interest of national authorities and policy makers in the EHEA, it is not surprising that the implementation of a learning outcome approach

has been an important development for 60% of institutions. As a result, by 2015, 64% have applied it to all courses and 21% to some courses. This shows a continuing progression since Trends 2010, when 53% had applied it to all courses. (Sursock 2015: 77)

However, the definition of learning outcomes by academics and their interpretation by the public and employers is far from being consensual, making it difficult to assert their contribution, or that of qualifications frameworks, to employability:

…academics–possibly with the exception of the institutional leadership and administration – and the wider public, including employers, have not fully embraced NQFs [National Qualifications Frameworks]. (Sursock 2015: 77)

Further efforts to consolidate and build progress on the definition and evaluation of learning outcomes remain necessary, as recognised in the Trends 2015 report: 'developing and assessing learning outcomes have been major issues in the EHEA and elsewhere in the world' (Sursock 2015: 77). In this vein, the *European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report* emphasises that ministers

… will strive for more coherence between our policies, especially in completing the transition to the three-cycle system, the use of ECTS credits, the issuing of Diploma Supplements, the enhancement of quality assurance and the implementation of qualifications frameworks, including the definition and evaluation of learning outcomes. (European Commission/EACEA/ Eurydice 2015: 47)

With regard to the implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks, the European Students' Union observes:

Considering their importance, alarmingly only 13 out of 38 unions responded that there is a national qualifications framework in their country and it is always being used. Eighteen unions reported that even though a qualifications framework has been established in their country, they see little to no usage of it. (ESU 2015: 49)

Additionally, in order to meet the requirements of the Europe of knowledge in terms of employability and economic competitiveness, higher education needs to provide outcomes that are relevant for the labour market,

by equipping students with appropriate competences and skills. Hence, closer relationships between the economic fabric and higher education institutions are expected to be promoted:

> … Such a cooperative project is envisaged to ensure that students are equipped with a combination of transversal skills and up-to-date subject-specific knowledge, enabling them to 'contribute to the wider needs of society and the labour market'. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015: 167)

It is important to underline that the focus on the enhancement of employ-ability on the basis of an output-oriented approach is shifting the attention of the reforms from their effective content to the need to monitor and measure the performance of higher education institutions in that respect. This is visible in measures some countries have taken to evaluate study programmes, in addition to those contemplated by quality assurance:

> While quality assurance is the most common evaluation mechanism in the EHEA … some countries have established other procedures through which the employability performance of higher education institutions can be assessed. One prominent goal of setting up such evaluation processes is to make employability-related information on higher education study pro-grammes public. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015: 206)

Furthermore, the objective of enhancing employability has reinforced quality assurance instruments. There are countries in the EHEA that

> … require higher education institutions to prove in the accreditation pro-cess that their programmes respond to labour market needs. Many coun-tries encourage higher education institutions to include labour market information (based on forecasts or through the involvement of employers) when defining learning outcomes, developing or changing the content of programmes, or even managing the number of students in different study fields. Similarly, many emphasise the importance of specific measures such as making sure that students can get an easy access to work placements or counselling and career guidance services. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015: 197)

Hence, quality assurance endeavours appear to validate the training func-tion of higher education institutions, aimed at promoting employability.

However, emphasising this output approach 'several countries … have compiled ranking systems of higher education institutions, where graduates' employment is one of the criteria' and 'a higher education institution's place in the ranking even influences the level of state funding it receives' (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015: 206). This perspective on employability articulates with the funding reforms and their output and performance based assumptions (Magalhães et al. 2013, 2012):

> … incentives, such as specific financial support to students or performance-based funding to institutions … could be linked to the employability of their graduates and therefore the assumed quality of their study programmes. (Sursock 2015: 57)

This link between the enhancement of employability and the funding reforms induces the development of monitoring instruments that, in turn, risks leading to an ends/means reversal (Neave and Veiga 2013), i.e. the measurement of higher education outputs on the basis of graduates' employability becomes an end in itself, which hinders the major goal of educating the European citizen (Magalhães and Veiga 2013), as also expressed by the European Students' Union:

> Higher education prepares students not only for employment, but for life as active citizens in democratic societies, as well as in their personal development and the development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base. (ESU 2015: 85)

Attractiveness

The achievement of attractiveness of the EHEA can be analysed by looking at the development of policy instruments such as structures, routines, standards, shared meanings and resources. Quality assurance as a means to build trust has assumed a central role in making the European higher education systems and their institutions attractive. In actual fact, in Bucharest, ministers stressed the importance of quality assurance in building trust and reinforcing the attractiveness of higher education in the EHEA (Bucarest Communiqué 2012). By the same token, the European Students' Union identified quality assurance as a 'tool to hold HEIs accountable, for public control, to improve recognition processes, which in turn results in building trust within and between the HE systems and promoting mobility' (ESU 2015: 35).

Trust is crucial to facilitate the recognition of studies. Recognition, in turn, would increase the attractiveness of the EHEA. Indeed, the promotion of degree mobility would be in vain without eliminating the problems that slow down or impede recognition, as these represent severe blows to attractiveness:

> The issue of recognition is important for student mobility in general, whether it is within national borders, within the EHEA or beyond. It is particularly important to cross-border mobility given the increased internationalisation trends in the world and the fact that Europe is an important study destination. (Sursock 2015: 47)

In this sense, quality assurance and credit systems based on the student workload are seen as very important instruments whose development speeds up achievements regarding attractiveness. As argued earlier, the institutionalisation of the EHEA was to take the form of common practices, grounded on shared values and common assumptions that underlay policies and policy instruments. However, the Trends 2015 report makes evident that these achievements are contingent on institutional contexts, as it is up to higher education institutions to take actions to increase their attractiveness and extend their outreach. Under this framework, institutions' language strategies, for example, emerged as a sensitive issue:

> … for incoming mobility, language-related barriers are considered to be equally important as funding. Some countries (Austria, France, Moldova, Hungary, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) note that the majority of courses are still offered in only one language. In some cases prospective mobile students are required to learn the language of the host country which could be time-consuming and result in additional financial burden. Language obstacles concerning ingoing mobility were twice as often cited compared to outgoing mobility. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015: 244)

Therefore, how attractiveness can balance 'a focus on common concerns and priorities (European Council 2000: 27), as opposed to taking as a point of departure the "celebration" of national diversity of education and research systems' (Maassen and Stensaker 2011: 760) is a continuing challenge. Such an example is the choice of teaching language. Language policies must deal with linguistic diversity within the EHEA, which is considered an obstacle to foster the attractiveness of European higher education systems.

Conclusions

The analysis of the fulfilment of Bologna policy objectives brings forward the influence of the European agenda responsible for broadening the focus of national and institutional reforms. While the national and institutional agendas of the Bologna reforms were dealing with the implementation of the Bologna degree structure, credit system, Diploma Supplement, quality assurance systems, qualifications frameworks or learning outcomes, the European agenda brought to the fore economic policy drivers and contributed to hindering the educational and social potential of the reforms. Therefore, Bologna's achievements and the establishment of the EHEA should be seen as contingent on the interaction between European, national and institutional agendas and priorities.

Additionally, achievements in the areas of mobility, employability and attractiveness are associated with the implementation of the above action lines translated into policy measures which should take the EHEA as an end. The extent to which these policy measures have been able to induce the establishment of structures and routines, the allocation of resources and higher levels of shared meanings and principles appears unconvincing. Hence achievements in these areas would require further measures focusing, for instance, on meaningful curricular renewals, on the development of genuinely shared credit systems or on additional public funding.

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Practice: The Achievement of Bologna Objectives in Portugal

National Legislation and Conditions for Implementation

INTRODUCTION

In the second part of the book we turn our attention to the enactment of policy and analyse the achievement of the three key objectives of the Bologna Process in Portugal: employability, mobility and international attractiveness of higher education. Our analysis draws, first, on national and/or European statistics with relevance for the three themes. Second, it draws on the accounts of Portuguese academics, students and employers that were collected between 2013 and 2015 through surveys and focus groups. These provided rich data on their perceptions and practices.

Online surveys were administered to each of these three groups between September 2013 and February 2014. The surveys sought to assess perceptions of the effects of the Bologna Process on Portuguese higher education institutions in the three key areas identified as the main objectives of this European-wide reform: employability, mobility and international attractiveness of institutions. Academics and students were surveyed with regards to the three themes, while employers were surveyed in relation to employability only.

To reach academics and students, seventeen institutions were chosen through stratified sampling to ensure representativeness in relation to the composition of the Portuguese higher education system, comprising universities and polytechnics, as well as public and private institutions. The selection was also made so as to include institutions of different sizes, as

well as institutions from the great metropolitan areas on the coast (Porto and Lisbon) and from the inland regions, which are running the risk of population exodus towards the large coastal cities. The selected institutions were asked to help with the distribution of the two surveys, one for academics and one for students, to their teaching staff and to the students enrolled in the first and second cycles.

Responses were received from 684 academics, of which 79.5% were over 40. This suggests that the majority were, most likely, already working in higher education in 2006 when the Bologna Process was implemented in Portugal and, therefore, were able to give informed opinions on the effects of the reform in their institution. The distribution of academics in the sample by higher education sectors and gender, compared to the distribution of the total number of academics in Portugal, is presented in Table 6.1. The sample closely mirrors the gender distribution of academics in Portugal. The sample also has balanced representation between the university and the polytechnic sectors, but somewhat overrepresents academics in public institutions, 82.84% in our sample against 71.95% in Portugal.

In the case of students, the targeted institutions displayed the following student distribution: 57% in public universities, 30.5% in public polytechnics and 12.5% in private institutions, which was almost identical to the distribution of students at national level. A total of 828 responses were

Table 6.1 Distribution of academics' responses across higher education sectors and gender in Portugal, compared to the total population of academics in Portugal (2013)

		*Academics in Portugal***	*Distribution of responses*	*N*
Higher education sector	Public	71.95%	82.84%	531
	Private	28.05%	17.16%	110
	University	61.86%	60.07%	385
	Polytechnic	38.14%	39.93%	256
	Total	100%	100%	641
	Not indicated			43
Gender	Male	56.0%	57.5%	368
	Female	44.0%	42.5%	272
	Total	100%	100%	640
	Not indicated			44

*Source: General Direction for Education and Science Statistics (DGEEC), 2013

Table 6.2 Distribution of students' responses across higher education sectors and gender in Portugal, compared to the total number of enrolled students in Portugal (2012/13)

		*Enrolled**	*Sample*	*N*
Higher education sector	Public	81.8%	88.5%	733
	Private	18.2%	11.5%	95
	University	66.1%	80.7%	668
	Polytechnic	33.9%	19.3%	160
	Total	100%	100%	828
Gender	Female	52,8%	52,4%	434
	Male	47,2%	47,6%	394
	Total	100%	100%	828

**Source*: DGEEC

returned (442 *licenciatura* students; 383 master students, 3 no indication). The distribution of the sample, compared to the Portuguese student population in 2012/13, is shown in Table 6.2. The sample over represents both students in public institutions and students in the university sector. However, although the distribution of the sample poses limitations for the generalisation of the results to the entire student population, the data has provided us with rich evidence to explore differences in perceptions among student groups (by higher education sector, disciplinary areas or gender).

Before surveying the employers, we had to take a number of considerations into account. First, engagement between universities and employers was found to be stronger in the case of larger enterprises, according to a recent report on university-business cooperation in several European countries (Melink et al. 2014). Second, in Portugal, 95% of enterprises employed under ten persons and a further 3% between 10 and 20 persons, according to Eurostat data for 2012, suggesting a large proportion are likely to be family-run businesses. Additionally, low education levels among employers prevailed in 2008: 81% of Portuguese employers had only low primary or secondary education (Instituto Nacional de Estatística 2010: 3). For these reasons, our survey aimed to seek the opinions of the larger Portuguese enterprises and the larger national or regional associations more likely to be cooperating with higher education institutions. Thus, we approached employers through the intermediary of nation-wide employer confederations in Portugal (Confederation of Portuguese Industry and Confederation of Commerce and Services), to which the

employer groups we had in mind belonged as members. Our main concern was therefore to obtain the highest possible number of responses from this kind of employer and avoid the great mass of very small businesses unlikely to be interested in higher education cooperation. Representatives of the confederations agreed to distribute the survey to their members. A total of 234 employers/employer associations received the survey: 105 from the Confederation of Portuguese Industry (45 %) and 129 from the Confederation of Commerce and Services (55 %). In total, 64 responses were returned, representing a response rate of 27.35 %. The distribution of the respondents by economic sector was as follows: 30 belonged to the service and commerce sector (39 %); 25 to the industry sector (47 %); and 9 did not indicate (14 %). Given the size of the employers' sample and its composition, we do not lay claim to the representativeness of the sample for Portuguese employers in general, but only for the larger businesses and associations.

We resorted to focus groups in higher education institutions as the second data collection method in order to get a better grasp of opinions beyond the general trends revealed by the surveys. These focus groups took place in the first half of 2015. We were interested in getting perceptions from a selection of disciplinary areas and types of higher education institutions. We selected three disciplines (Arts/Design, Computer Engineering and Management), covering three broad knowledge areas (Arts, Hard Sciences and Social Sciences), to get insight into potential differences across disciplines. We then tried to identify institutions across the four types in Portuguese higher education (public university, public polytechnic, private university and private polytechnic) that would offer programmes in all the three areas. This was not possible in the case of private polytechnics, which usually are specialised in certain niche disciplines. For these reasons, we chose five institutions in all: a public university, a public polytechnic, a private university and two private polytechnics. In-depth focus groups were conducted separately, with academics and with students (five to six participants in each group) from each of these institutions. Additionally, the focus groups were held separately in each of the three disciplines. That is, for each discipline, in each institution, we conducted two focus groups: one with academics and one with students (see Table 6.3). In total, 24 focus groups were conducted with the participation of around 150 total participants. Students were generally in the final year of the first degree, the *licenciatura*. The discussion explored the participants' perceptions about employability, mobility and the institutions' international

Table 6.3 Institutions and study programmes which participated in the focus groups

Institution	Type	Study programmes	Focus groups
Institution A	Public University	Arts	2
		Computer Engineering	2
		Management	2
Institution B	Public Polytechnic	Visual Arts and Arts Technology	2
		Computer Engineering	2
		Tourism Management/Business Studies	2
Institution C	Private University	Design	2
		Computer Engineering	2
		Management (or Hospitality Management)	2
Institution D	Private Polytechnic	Computer Engineering	2
		Management	2
Institution E	Private Polytechnic	Arts (Illustration/Graphics/Multimedia)	2

attractiveness. Focus group discussions were transcribed and analysed with the help of the qualitative analysis software MaxQDA.

The survey and the focus groups both generated a wide and rich array of data and insights. Unfortunately, we cannot do full justice to their complexity in the space of this book. Neither have we had the time to explore all the data to date. For example, the chapter on employability draws on survey data, while the chapters on mobility and attractiveness rely mainly on data collected during the focus groups. Therefore, only a selection of findings will be presented in the second part of the book, but we hope that these will be sufficient to support the arguments we will put forward. Before we get there, in the following sections we present a panorama of policy making in Portugal and the key principles that characterise higher education policy, as well as the most recent developments. This will provide the contextual information necessary to set the background for our findings.

Peculiar Characteristics of the Portuguese State

Hofstede (1991), a Dutch social psychologist, argues that national cultures differ in particular at the level of, usually unconscious, values held by a majority of the population and he defines values as 'broad preferences for one state of affairs over others'. The values that distinguish national cultures from each other could be statistically categorised into groups or

cultural dimensions. Because values are acquired in childhood, national cultures are remarkably stable over time; change in national values is a matter of generations. What we see changing around us, in response to changing circumstances, are practices (symbols, heroes and rituals), leaving the underlying values untouched. This is why differences between countries often have such a remarkable historical continuity.

Hofstede's research has shown that organisational cultures differ mainly at the level of practices (symbols, heroes and rituals); these are more superficial and more easily learned and unlearned than the values that form the core of national cultures. As a consequence, Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures are not relevant for comparing organisations within the same country. National cultures belong to anthropology; organisational cultures belong to sociology. Hofstede states that countries display differences in attributes within several relevant dimensions concerning organisational life, classroom behaviour and societal views of institutions, professionals and leaders, as well as on politics and ideas (Hofstede 1991). He characterises national cultures by using the scores of cultural dimensions or groups of values that distinguish national cultures from each other. Initially Hofstede defined four dimensions—Power Distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Femininity and Uncertainty Avoidance. Later, two other dimensions were added— Pragmatic versus Normative and Indulgence versus Restraint (Hofstede et al. 2010).

Hofstede suggests that the Portuguese society has a very strong uncertainty avoidance score, combined with a strong feminine, normative and restrained character (Hofstede 1991). In his view, this implies, on the one hand, a perceived need for a wide range of precise laws and regulations and, on the other hand, a desire for consensus, a preference for resolving conflicts by compromise and negotiation, and, in general, a permissive and tolerant culture. The Portuguese society can be considered rather soft, gentle and permissive. Conflicts seldom lead to violent action, as was demonstrated by the 1974 revolution, during which revolutionaries escorted all the former rulers out of the country without reprisals—indeed, most of them were later allowed to return without too much trouble. It is also true that although there are many laws of strong regulatory character, they are not always taken seriously. Harsh measures are rarely fully enforced, and a great deal of sympathy is often shown towards the weak and the fallen.

At the same time, the main political issues, including higher education (accessibility, equality of opportunities, quality, autonomy, graduates'

professional profiles, etc.), tend to be discussed rather vaguely and in broad generic political statements by the political parties in the Portuguese parliament. This approach is reflected in the legal corpus and has given rise to what the Portuguese sociologist Santos (1990, 1993) has named the Parallel State, to characterise 'the gap between the law coverage and intentions and the social and political fabric it is intended to regulate' (Amaral et al. 2003b: 141). Following the 1974 revolution, the new Portuguese Constitution had a strong socialist character, including the ingredients to implement a socialist society. However, none of the left wing parties were ever able to win the general elections and the more moderate political parties in power had to legislate under a constitutional rule that did not correspond to their political convictions and programmes. Therefore, successive governments passed legislation that resorted to ingenious interpretations of the constitution and did not strictly comply either with the spirit or with the letter of the fundamental law. A good example was the legislation allowing for the increase of the fees paid by students in public higher education institutions, even though the constitution proclaimed that higher education should progressively become free of charge. This helps to explain why legislation is frequently implemented slowly, in many cases resorting to interpretations that soften its consequences, and sometimes not being at all implemented until a new government changes the legislation.

This explains why the state finds great difficulty in enforcing any credible system of *a posteriori* control and in general prefers to resort to *a priori* scrutiny: for example, the Ministry of Education had preference for approving programme proposals rather than inspecting them once the programmes were in place. Following Hofstede (1991), the national practice of avoiding conflicts or taking harsh decisions also resulted in the late approval of proposals. Indeed, it was somewhat frequent that the Ministry, instead of taking decisions on the proposals of private institutions, simply decided not to answer at all. Nor was it unusual to find that many private institutions had initiated study programmes without the necessary government permission—and had later been favoured with retroactive governmental decisions, which legalised their situation (Amaral and Teixeira 2000).

There is also a feeling of increasing state interference in higher education in Portugal, which is shared by other authors in diverse countries. For Tapper and Salt, increasing state intervention has been eroding institutional autonomy, forcing institutions to deliver outcomes in keeping with

politically-defined goals: 'over time the political control of policy direction has become both more all-encompassing and more detailed' (2004: 12). Others suggest that the university is progressively becoming 'a part of an economic program serving national interests under the state's control or supervision' (Maassen and Van Vught 1994; Tunnermann 1996; Green and Hayward 1997), and that the state is playing an increasingly influential role in steering higher education to develop the national competence in global economic competition (Husen 1994).

Governments have been introducing an increasing number of mechanisms to ensure that institutions will behave as the government wants them to behave. The methods used depend on the level of government sophistication. Richardson and Fielden (1997) defend that as the government increasingly uses more sophisticated controls through planning mechanisms, buffer bodies and financial controls, the less interest it seems to have in being directly involved with university governance. These mechanisms include an extensive array of performance indicators and measures of academic quality, while quality assessment may be used a compliance tool. However, in what Kraak describes as situations of a weak state 'unable to attain the sophistication required for "steering" and, as a consequence, necessitating a reversion back to a conception of the state as bureaucratic and prescriptive' (Kraak 2001: 31), there is a tendency of resorting to 'a bureaucratic, weak and arbitrary form of intervention based on prescriptive fiat and rigid rules and procedures' (ibid.). This is the case of Portugal, where increasing *a priori* intervention from the state is eroding institutional autonomy—a situation made even more acute as a consequence of the recent economic crisis.

The Historical Context

At the time of the 1974 revolution, Portugal was a rather backward country due to more than half a century of the right-wing, narrow-minded policies of the former dictator, Salazar. The higher education system was elitist with a participation rate below 7% of the relevant age cohort, which resulted in minute participation of students from the lower classes. In the early 1970s, the former dictatorial regime became aware of these shortcomings, but it did too little, too late to deal with the problem before being overthrown. It was only in 1973 that the National Assembly (the parliament) passed Act 5/73, of 25 July, reforming the higher education system. This Reform Act formally created, for the first time in Portugal,

a binary system, and new universities and the first polytechnic institutes were established. This set of reforms aimed at expanding the higher education system within the new binary structure. However, the 1974 revolution suspended the implementation of this reform, and many new higher education institutions, such as the new polytechnics, were to remain as mere 'political statements' for some years.

There was a dramatic change from a right wing, conservative authoritarian regime to a radical left wing socialist regime in the aftermath of the 1974 revolution. Higher education institutions were submerged in political turmoil, and their governance bodies were disbanded as their members were in general seen as fascist and authoritarian. The legislation regulating institutional governance was seen to be undemocratic, as students and the lower ranks of the academia had no participation in the governance bodies. At the same time, the reforms of secondary education created a substantial increase in demand for access to higher education, which could not be satisfied by public higher education institutions without serious disruption. However, the difficult economic situation created after the revolution did not allow the investments necessary for expanding the system.

To control the access to higher education, the government decided to implement a *numerus clausus* system, initially for Medicine and Veterinary Medicine and later extended to every study programme. The *numerus clausus* for each programme was determined by the institutions' capacity in terms of physical infrastructure and academic staff rather than by market demands. This policy protected public higher education institutions from an excessive increase in enrolments, but generated dramatic social tensions because many candidates were left outside the system without any alternative.

The Development of the Private Sector

The government had to create conditions to expand access to higher education, even if a difficult economic situation did not allow for the necessary investments in facilities and qualified staff. As the new 1976 constitution recognised the freedom to learn and teach as a fundamental right, it also opened the way for the development of private higher education, which had the advantage of easing the access problem without further demands on the public purse.

The development of private institutions was initially rather slow, probably due to the lack of legislation and/or tradition. In January 1979, the minister of education authorised the first private higher education institution.

Enrolments in private institutions in 1982/83 were only about 11% of total enrolments. But the pace of implementation accelerated after the mid-1980s. In the late-1980s, Minister Roberto Carneiro (1987–1991) decided to almost entirely abolish the requirements for access to higher education, legislating that entrance examinations were only to be used for ranking students in the national tender for vacancies, without any minimum required marks. Many students who had been unable to enter higher education because of their low marks were suddenly offered a new opportunity. And many did enter—even with a zero in the entrance examinations, provided there were vacancies, which created a very sharp increase in demand.

The fast expansion of the private sector was also promoted by the lack of control over quality, while new legislation allowed the private sector to take advantage of the moonlighting activities of public sector academics. The private share of student enrolments jumped from 11% in 1982/83 to 21.6% in 1989/90, and to 34.7% in 1996/97. In the mid-1990s the gross participation rate in higher education was already over 50% and a new minister decided that it was time to change the policy from uncontrolled expansion to increased quality by reversing the access rules. Higher education institutions were allowed to set minimum marks in the access examinations to higher education. This decision exposed those institutions that could not attract students to public scrutiny, as they tried to fill as many vacancies as possible by using lower entrance standards. In 2002, new legislation again enforced minimum marks in the national access examinations for all candidates in all sectors of higher education. More recently, examinations in disciplines that students consider more difficult (e.g. Mathematics, Physics or Chemistry) were imposed for access to some areas (e.g. Engineering). These changes in legislation were going to have significant consequences by decreasing the number of candidates to higher education, as we will discuss later in this chapter.

The Development of the Polytechnics

The first attempt to create a binary system dates from 1973 and was influenced by OECD recommendations. The political justification for the reform was mainly economic and aimed at using manpower resources as a tool for convergence with the development patterns of other European countries. This attempt did not succeed due to the 1974 revolution. The second attempt was implemented with financing and advice from the World Bank. The World Bank's approach was economic and supported by

two key ideas: improving the system's level of economic efficiency by promoting shorter technical degrees (shorter teacher training degrees, higher student/staff ratios, etc.) and treating Portugal as a provider of specialised manpower for manufacturing industries, services and agriculture. The World Bank considered Portugal as a less developed country that would need fewer high-skilled graduates and thought that the focus should be on training middle-level graduates and technicians (Teixeira et al. 2003).

In 1977, the Decree-Law 427-B/77 instituted polytechnic higher education as 'short duration higher education, aiming at training technicians and professionals of education at an intermediate level of higher education'. The explicit political intention was both 'to diversify higher education, and to satisfy urgent needs in several socioeconomic sectors through the training of qualified technicians'. In 1979, the expression *short duration higher education* was replaced by *polytechnic higher education* and its professional focus was reinforced (Decree-Law 513-T/79).

The development of the polytechnics was seen as a political priority. New institutions were created, large investments were made in new buildings and equipment and their regional character was stressed by allowing the institutions to reserve a percentage of vacancies for students living in the region. From 1983–1984 to 2001–2002 the share of enrolments in public polytechnics rose from 12.6% to 27.9%. The available data also show that over the period 1980–1998 vacancies in the public university sector increased at a yearly average rate of 5.21%, compared to 17.17% for public polytechnics. Despite this apparent quantitative success, the polytechnic sector has not been able to emerge as an attractive option for many students, which nowadays places it in a difficult situation, as there is increasing competition for students. To understand this situation, one should not ignore the positional character (Hirsh 1976) of higher education. Diversification via the binary system is tainted by a political bias: the elitism implicit within the university subsystem.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The main political objective of increasing access to higher education was apparently successful, as the gross participation rate increased from 7% in 1974 to over 50% in the mid-1990s. However, some secondary objectives, such as giving priority to areas relevant to the national economy or the pursuit of quality, were many times sacrificed to the dominant objective of improving participation in higher education at any cost.

Policy implementation was not easy, as different actors had different degrees of commitment to the various objectives of the reforms. Sometimes the objectives of different actors were even quite different from those of the government. Successive ministers of education had different ideological commitments to the development of the private sector and shared some distrust of private higher education, which played a negative role in the implementation of this policy. The idea that free private initiative associated with market regulation would provide a diversified higher education system more responsive to the needs of the regions and the demands of the more disadvantaged population sectors (Franco 1994) was mere wishful thinking. The private sector was 'characterised mostly by its low-risk behaviour, and its peculiar responsiveness in terms of market *stimuli* that favoured concentration in low-cost and/or *safer* initiatives' and 'it was more frequent to observe either a duplication of public supply, or a rapid expansion (but not its initiation) of low-cost disciplines, in both cases in areas with a strong demand' (Teixeira and Amaral 2001: 390–391). This resulted in the expansion of the private sector in areas that were not a priority of the government and its concentration in the main urban areas (Lisbon and Porto), while ignoring less populated regions.

Although the initial definition of the role and objectives of the polytechnics was clearly proposed by the World Bank, not all actors agreed with it. Academic drift and several changes of the legal framework have progressively made the differences between polytechnics and universities less distinct, without reinforcing the social standing of polytechnics. After 1986, the government began to emphasise the need for polytechnics to 'develop professional knowledge which was better adapted to production' in opposition to the 'more theoretical and abstract knowledge imparted by the universities' (Amaral et al. 2002: 24). However, most polytechnics proclaimed their role as 'providers of local services, connected through their curricula to local realities' as a rhetorical device, while in reality offering study programmes covering 'an array of disciplinary and technological areas of knowledge which were identical to the initial training programmes of the new universities, or of the schools of engineering and management/economics of the more traditional universities' (Amaral et al. 2002: 23). Additionally, the political decision of implementing the polytechnic network 'was not underpinned by any credible forecasts of general or sectorial labour demands which were likely to result from the development dynamics of the Portuguese economy' (Amaral et al. 2002: 21). The World Bank's recommendation to limit access to university education in

favour of shorter degrees, based on a perspective of a world division of labour, was not adequately implemented, and later the World Bank recognised that it had led to a scarcity of engineers (Teixeira et al. 2003).

Recently, there has been a drastic change in social conditions. A constant decrease in the number of candidates to higher education has led to a situation where the number of vacancies clearly exceeds the number of candidates. Economic conditions have changed from a relatively comfortable economic situation to one of economic recession. This has strongly influenced governmental priorities that have changed from unfettered expansion to a decrease in enrolments and strong emphasis on quality. This has created a strong competition for students, which places the private sector in serious disadvantage because it charges higher fees not balanced by higher quality. Like the private sector, polytechnics have also been strongly affected. Being seen as 'second choice institutions', their low capacity to attract students will place them in a difficult situation as competition for students increases.

The Portuguese higher education system is fastly approaching an unprecedented crisis situation, which will last for several decades. Demographic forecasts (Dias et al. 2013) tell that over the next 25 years Portugal will lose between 20 and 25% of the 18–30-year-old cohort, which will have very negative consequences for enrolments in higher education. This is already visible by analysing the data from Table 6.4, which shows that total student enrolments had a maximum above 400,000 in 2002/03 but lost some 10% until 2013/14.

There are, however, very significant differences between subsectors. So far the private sector was very strongly affected with a loss of about 50% of total enrolments between 1996/97 and 2013/14, with a higher loss for

Table 6.4   Total student enrolments

		1996/97	2001/02	2002/03	2006/07	2011/12	2013/14
Public	University	147,349	176,449	178,000	169,449	197,912	198,380
	Polytechnic	65,377	108,486	112,532	105,872	113,662	103,274
	Total public	212,726	284,789	290,532	275,321	311,574	301,654
Private	University	94,423	78,592	75,993	60,094	55,147	44,495
	Polytechnic	26,976	33,220	34,306	31,314	23,552	16,051
	Total private	121,399	111,812	110,299	91,408	78,699	60,546
	Total	334,125	334,125	400,381	366,729	390,273	362,200

Source: DGEEC

universities (loss of 53%) than for polytechnics (loss of 40%). For the same period, the public sector shows a 42% increase in enrolments, but between 2011/12 and 2013/14 there was already a loss of almost 10,000 students in public polytechnics, while university enrolments remained more or less stable.

These examples clearly indicate that the Portuguese higher education system is entering a crisis, which will last for at least two or three decades. This crisis was induced by a declining number of candidates to higher education under the combined effects of different factors, such as consistently low birth rates, more demanding academic conditions to access higher education, the economic crisis and soaring unemployment rates. Data in Table 6.4 show that the different segments of the higher education system behave as expected in the case of goods with very high positional value, as is the case of higher education. Institutions at the top of a ranking in terms of academic prestige or the cost/benefit ratio, such as public universities, will be less affected by the crisis than those institutions at the lower end of the ranking, as is the case of private institutions. Public polytechnics occupy a middle position.

Dias et al. (2013) argue that some factors may soften the crisis, such as policies to encourage and promote access to higher education, the enlargement of the recruitment base (making enrolment in the 12th class of secondary education mandatory or increasing the efficiency of secondary education) and raising aspirations to enrol in higher education (as it promotes employability). However, there are also some negative factors such as the effects of the economic crisis, immigration or the effects of an increasingly concentred offer. In any case, we believe that the net effect of those factors will always be negative, resulting in a strong decrease in the number of candidates to higher education. This will create an enormous pressure over private institutions and many may disappear. There will also be a strong pressure over public polytechnics, which will be forced to change their educational offer to include study programmes at lower levels of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Public universities will have some protection due to the positional character of higher education and they will be less damaged than the other institutions, although this will also depend on their position in the ranking of academic prestige.

To summarise, we may say that higher education policies have presented mixed results, one of the major problems being the difficulty of consistently implementing them because different actors and successive ministers did not share the same values and ideology, and because the

social and economic reality has changed over the years without adaptation of the policies to the new reality.

GOVERNANCE AND AUTONOMY

Following the 1974 revolution in Portugal, a new constitution was passed in 1976 that explicitly recognised universities as autonomous institutions. After the early revolutionary leftist excesses, a normalisation process was initiated that ended in 1986, ten years later, in tune with a revision of the constitution (1989) and European integration (1986). Over this period, education policies were divided between socialist goals and the need to eliminate revolutionary excesses and between the need to fulfil the objectives prescribed by the 'socialist' constitution and the need to gain international support and recognition. These parallel, often contradictory, policy rationales were translated into educational policies with a great amount of ambiguity.

In 1988, the parliament passed Law 108/88 of 24 September, conferring universities a substantial degree of institutional autonomy. Universities were allowed to initiate new study programmes without *a priori* authorisation from the ministry; they could hire their academic and non-academic staff; rectors were elected by the academy; they were responsible for the construction of new buildings; the net balances of annual budgets could be transferred to the next fiscal year; their budget became an envelope budget that could be modified by the rector; and so on. They were also allowed to draft their own statutes in compliance with general rules defined in the new legislation, promoting traditional collegial decision-making by the members of the university.

By the end of the 1990s, the pendulum began to swing in the opposite direction. The expansion of the system substantially increased public expenditure and public policy progressively emphasised efficiency and the best use of resources. Quality and efficiency-related parameters were introduced in the funding formula and the quality assurance system was criticised for not producing results (Amaral and Rosa 2004: 415–416). The rhetoric based on efficient, flexible and effective governance was apparently gaining favour among academics, who wanted to see a merit-based governance system after the 'democratic excesses' following the 1974 revolution. In their views, the system also gave students an over-representation in governing bodies (Amaral et al. 2003a: 277). However, the minister did not stay long in office and the emergence of New Public Management (NPM) had to wait for another opportunity.

Institutional autonomy was progressively questioned as neoliberal policies were introduced in the public sector. The government coming to office in 2002 was not alone in its sympathy for NPM. A survey commissioned by the minister (Amaral 2003) revealed that academics were divided into two extreme positions, some favouring collegial governance, democratic election of the rector and external participation of stakeholders limited to advisory functions, while a significant number of others proposed a more managerialist approach to governance grounded on NPM principles. They favoured the adoption of management practices and techniques imported from the private sector, such as the replacement of elected rectors with appointed rectors or even with professional managers, and the establishment of boards of trustees. Students expressed more conservative opinions, being explicit supporters of collegial governance. They were against the concentration of power in professionalised executive bodies and opposed having a rector from outside the university and any form of legitimacy different from the democratic legitimacy conferred by direct election. And they did not approve of the presence of external stakeholders with decision-making power.

In 2005, a new government was elected by a majority in Parliament that provided the new opportunity for the emergence of NPM in Portuguese higher education. The new framework law for higher education, Law 62/2007 of 10 September, was publicly presented as the emergence of NPM in higher education. As under the previous framework law (Law 108/88), the new legislation allows HEIs to draw their own statutes and to change them, although both statutes and their alterations require the government's legal ratification. The analysis of the new Portuguese legislation reveals characteristics inspired by NPM, such as concentration of power in the central administration of the organisation; loss of collegiality; strong participation of external stakeholders; privatisation under the guise of foundation universities; funding using performance contracts; and a new accreditation system increasing accountability.

Quality Assurance

The government also changed the former quality assessment system that was seen as not producing effective results (Amaral and Rosa 2004). Following the recommendations of an European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) review team, the government created a new Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education, responsible for the accreditation of every HEI and their study programmes.

Going back in time, the first initiative on quality assessment dates from 1993, when the Portuguese Council of Rectors organised a pilot experiment in quality assurance. In 1994, the Parliament passed the Quality Assessment Act, Law 38/94. The ministry entrusted the Foundation of Portuguese Universities, similar to the Association of Universities in the Netherlands, with responsibility for the assessment of public universities. The first assessment cycle was completed in 1999 and included only public universities and the Catholic University. The Decree-Law 205/98 extended the system to public polytechnics and the private sector and created an overall coordination council (Conselho Nacional de Avaliação do Ensino Superior [National Council for the Assessment of Higher Education] (CNAVES)). The second assessment cycle began in 2000 and included all institutions. CNAVES became responsible for ensuring the 'harmony, cohesion and credibility' of the overall system and for carrying out its meta-evaluation (Amaral and Rosa 2004). However, the system was not effective and, by the end of the second cycle, there had not been a single example of a study programme closure as a result of poor quality. In 2002, the minister publicly complained that the conclusions of the external reports were obscure, and decided to change the quality system. The parliament passed Law 1/2003 introducing academic accreditation. By forcing the quality reports to produce an accreditation-type conclusion (a yes or no answer), the minister aimed at having a sounder basis for acting. However, the minister did not stay long in office, the law was never regulated and accreditation was quickly forgotten.

The new government, installed in 2005, implemented a new quality assurance system in full compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), elaborated in the context of the Bologna Process. In 2005, the Portuguese government decided to ask for international reviews of the higher education system and its institutions, including a review of the national accreditation and quality assurance practices, which was commissioned to ENQA. ENQA was also asked to provide recommendations for the establishment of a new national accreditation system complying with the ESG. The terms of reference committed ENQA to provide advice on academic and management structures for implementing adequate quality assurance and accreditation practices and to provide a final report including recommendations for improvement and for complying with the ESG.

The major strengths of the Portuguese quality assurance system, as identified by the ENQA panel, were its comprehensiveness, as it included all HEIs, its contribution to the establishment of a self-evaluation culture, and its methodological model, which was in principle appropriate, and in many respects already compliant with the ESG. The major identified

weaknesses were its apparently limited independence (like the former Dutch system, there was strong intervention of the HEIs); the lack of sufficient operational efficiency and consistency (limited staff numbers, no efficient training of the reviewers, inconsistencies in reporting, etc.); low internationalisation; and, above all, a serious lack of consequences. The report was used to define a new system in full compliance with the ESG. The parliament passed a new Quality Assessment Act (Law 38/2007) defining the new quality framework, and the government passed the Decree-Law 369/2007 defining the statutes of the Assessment and Accreditation Agency (A3ES), established as a private foundation independent of both the government and higher education institutions.

Under the new legal framework, the A3ES is responsible for the assessment and accreditation of all higher education institutions and their study programmes, taking into account the contribution of internal quality assurance systems. Law 38/2007 assigns higher education institutions the responsibility for adopting quality assurance policies and procedures for their implementation, developing a culture of quality and of quality assurance and promoting and implementing a strategy for continuous enhancement of quality. The same law determines that external evaluation procedures 'should take into account the efficacy of the internal quality assurance procedures'. Moreover, in the preamble to Decree-Law 369/2007, one of the mainstays of the new system of evaluation and accreditation is defined as 'the demand for the development and implementation by higher education institutions of their own quality assurance systems, which may be subject to certification'.

The legislation thus reaffirms that the quality of teaching and learning is primarily the responsibility of each higher education institution, and that they must create internal structures and procedures to assure this quality. It is the responsibility of A3ES to support the institutions in the implementation of their internal quality assurance systems and to undertake audits with a view to their certification.

THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

The implementation of the Bologna Process in Portugal has been a lengthy and messy affair. This was the direct result of the peculiarities of the Portuguese legislative tradition and its emphasis on very detailed and prescriptive regulations. In 1986, the Parliament passed the Education System Act, Law 46/86 of 14 October, which was supposed to be a

framework law defining the main characteristics of the system. However, this law included many elements of detailed regulation, such as the strict definition of the type and length of the higher education degrees and which institutions had the right to award them. Unfortunately, those legal injunctions were incompatible with the Bologna structure, which made the implementation of the Bologna Process impossible without previously changing the Act. This was a difficult task, because governments had no parliamentary majority for a number of years.

In May 2004, the parliament passed an act that brought alterations to the Education Act to ensure compliance with the new Bologna-type degree structure. However, the act contained dispositions on other matters and was not consensual. All the political parties in opposition voted against it and, although the government had a majority, the President of the Republic (July 2004) decided against promulgating the act, which was then returned to the parliament for reconsideration. However, there were new elections before this could be done. Meanwhile, the government passed legislation (Decree-Law no. 42/2005 of 22 February) to regulate the instruments allowing for the implementation of the Bologna Process, which were compatible with the Education System Act. This legislation introduced an ECTS-compatible credit system, made compulsory the use of the Diploma Supplement, regulated the conversion to the European scale of grade comparability and regulated the learning agreement.

The minister also appointed specialised task forces (for disciplines or groups of disciplines) to work on the implementation of the law. The government expected that the task forces would come up with a definition of disciplinary competencies, minimum curricular contents and accreditation rules. However, the work of the task forces resulted in very heated debates. The debates addressed the feeling that the compatibility of the binary system with the two-tier degree system should be carefully analysed because it could endanger the system's structure at a time when considerable academic drift could be observed in the polytechnic subsystem. The proposal for replacing the initial degrees of universities and polytechnics by one single degree could therefore have serious consequences, contributing to the development of a unitary system. Another controversial matter was the nature of the higher education institutions that would be allowed to confer post-graduate degrees, with polytechnics using the opportunity to put pressure on authorities to become more similar to universities.

Therefore, to the discontent of ministers and the desperation of higher education institutions, the process dragged on while those heated public

debates took place. The system was in a state of flux, with a high degree of confusion and uncertainty that led to ad hoc changes of study programmes at institutional level without national coordination. Portuguese HEIs, aware of international trends, got tired of waiting for governmental regulation and decided to follow these trends, with mixed success. On the one hand, the public universities could use their full pedagogic autonomy, granted by the 1988 University Autonomy Act, to change their study programmes, and many had already introduced the ECTS system and implemented the Diploma Supplement even before Decree-Law no. 42/2005 was passed. On the other hand, public polytechnics and private institutions had less autonomy than the public universities and were forced to submit their study programmes for ministerial approval. They had all their proposals using the ECTS system rejected on the grounds of lack of appropriate legislation, which caused a lot of frustration.

The new government, installed on 12 March 2005, had a parliamentary majority and on 30 August 2005 the parliament passed Law 49/2005, which finally made the necessary changes to the Education System Act (Law 46/86). In March 2006, the government passed Decree-Law 74/2006 creating the new Bologna-type degree structure. Against all expectations, the new legislation aimed to preserve, or even to reinforce, the binary system by creating a kind of hierarchy based on the length of studies, the qualification of the academic staff, the emphasis on research and the type of degrees universities and polytechnics could award. Universities were free to decide on the length of the first cycles between 180 and 240 ECTS while polytechnics could only in very special cases offer first cycles with more than 180 ECTS. Only universities could award integrated masters and doctoral degrees. And there was also a considerable distinction at the level of the composition of academic staff. While in universities there was emphasis on academics holding a PhD and there was a tight connection between teaching and research, the academic staff of polytechnics was supposed to emphasise the presence of 'specialists', meaning people with a relevant professional career, which was consistent with the idea that polytechnics should have a more vocational approach to education.

Indeed, polytechnics resented in particular that the rules for awarding masters were tailored to the characteristics of universities, which confirmed the idea that 'a number of practically oriented institutions may thus feel threatened by being integrated in a system where they are going to find their place in a hierarchically organised setting according to criteria that are alien to them' (Bleiklie 2005: 43). Not surprisingly, by 2009

universities had been entitled to award 1914 masters, while polytechnics could award only 576.

Decree-Law 74/2006 also called for proposals for Bologna-type degree programmes with a very short time limit (2 weeks) and set the academic year 2009/10 as the deadline for the adaptation of all degrees to the Bologna structure. The ministry's expectation was that higher education institutions would present proposals only in exceptional cases due to the very short time granted. However, higher education institutions immediately made an attempt at the fast implementation of the new system, considering that Bologna-followers would have an advantage over Bologna-laggards in the competition for students. Contrary to the ministry's expectations, the institutions presented 1464 proposals, 33% of them for new study programmes and 67% for adaptations of old programmes to the Bologna-type structure. A total of 28% of the proposals originated from public universities, 27% from public polytechnics and 45% from the private sector (Veiga and Amaral 2009). The regulations for adapting the old study programmes to the Bologna structure also set some limits to the pedagogic autonomy of institutions: one old, first cycle study programme could only be converted into one Bologna-type first cycle, but no limits were set for masters and PhDs, leading to an explosive development of post-graduate studies, especially at the masters level.

A survey was conducted among the leadership of the higher education institutions after this first implementation period (Veiga and Amaral 2007). In general, the opinions of the leaders were positive and rather optimistic, which was not surprising as they were in general favourable to the Bologna Process. However, at the lower levels of the institutions there were mixed feelings about the Process (Reichert and Tauch 2005). The leadership of institutions identified a number of problems that might undermine the implementation process. A major one was related to the financing rules, which were not defined *a priori* by the ministry. Public institutions did not know how the funding formula would be adapted to the new situation and they were not sure about the level of tuition fees, which had a maximum value for the old first degrees but not for post-graduate degrees. They also complained that there was a lack of implementation guidelines and that the two weeks given to present proposals was too short a period. However, the leadership of institutions had, in general, positive evaluations of the process for defining competencies and considered that the Bologna curricular reform would have a positive impact on the success of students.

Institutions declared that the credit system based on student workload was, in general, being implemented after taking into account the opinions of students and professors, which was surprising as they had only two weeks to present proposals. However, the higher education institutions participating in the survey expected to review the credits allocated in a very high number of cases (72.4 % in universities and 81.5 % in polytechnics), which is an indication that the accuracy of the credit allocation mechanism was questionable. The perceptions of the implementation of the Bologna recognition instruments (e.g. learning agreement, Diploma Supplement, European grading scale, transcript of records), made compulsory by law, were less favourable, with public universities more optimistic (3.67 on average, on a 5-point Likert scale), while the private polytechnics were less optimistic (2.75 on the scale) (Veiga and Amaral 2007). The problems with using the Bologna tools reported in Trends V were also visible in Portugal, namely the incorrect and superficial use of the ECTS, the disappointing use of the Diploma Supplement and the lack of involvement of higher education institutions in the development of the National Qualifications Framework.

There were different expectations about mobility. In the case of horizontal mobility (mobility within the same cycle), universities had higher expectations of more activities in the second cycle when compared with the first cycle (3.37 against 3.00), with the reverse true for polytechnics (3.06 against 3.22), which may be explained by the number of masters being offered by polytechnics. In the case of mobility after the first degree, Portuguese higher education institutions had, in general, high expectations that students would continue from the first cycle into the second cycle at the same higher education institution, which is clearly against the objectives of the Bologna Process. Private polytechnics had the maximum average score (4.47), followed by public universities (4.20). When asked about the capacity to attract students from other institutions for the second cycle, private polytechnics had the highest expectations (3.29). This was surely a surprising and unrealistic opinion, as Portuguese higher education statistics show that the private sector is, in general, the last choice of candidates for higher education (Teixeira and Amaral 2007). And, as might be expected, universities had lower expectations (2.71) than polytechnics (3.63) that students would enter the labour market after the first cycle. Mobility and employability, although assumed as major political goals of Bologna at both the national level by each government and the European level, did not have the same priority for Portuguese higher

education institutions, which preferred to emphasise the importance of achieving the shift from the teaching paradigm to the learning paradigm (Veiga and Amaral 2007).

We might say that the Bologna implementation process in Portugal was rather interesting, as it started rather late when there was a lot of frustration and tension among institutions. It was like a spring that is kept under tension and is suddenly released. Despite the small time interval allowed for institutions to present adaptation proposals (a mere 2 weeks), almost 1500 proposals were submitted to the ministry. And until the academic year 2009/10, many other proposals were submitted so that by the end of the implementation deadline there were 5262 study programmes registered in the Directorate General for Higher Education (1945 first cycles, 126 integrated masters, 2490 masters and 697 doctoral programmes). Masters programmes had the most explosive development, despite the difficulties polytechnics had in proposing them. This may be explained by the legal limitation to the expansion of the number of first cycles, as the adaptation of an old programme to Bologna could only produce a single first cycle. However, no such limitation was imposed on masters. The activity of the new quality agency has changed this panorama by eliminating study programmes that did not comply with the legal minimum quality standards. It is also true that higher education institutions have used the agency as an opportunity to eliminate some of the excesses that resulted from the too-fast implementation of Bologna. So far about 40 % of the programmes available in 2009/10 have beem eliminated (Sin et al. 2015), getting replaced with a smaller number of new programmes aiming at offering better quality of provision and increasing the overall efficiency of the system.

Conclusions

After the 1974 revolution, the Portuguese higher education system went through a very fast expansion until the mid-1990s. The major contribution to this expansion came from the implementation of a new network of public polytechnics and the development of a private sector, while enrolments in public universities proceeded at a slower pace. In the new century, the expansion came to a stop and enrolments even started to decrease due to a number of factors, including low birth rates, more demanding academic conditions to enter higher education and an economic crisis. The new century also saw a number of changes in the legal framework for

higher education, following international trends related to the emergence of the market as an instrument of public regulation, and the development of NPM. Governance was changed to increase the participation of external stakeholders, power was concentred at the top management level, collegiality was strongly reduced and a new quality assessment system complying with the ESG was implemented.

The implementation of the Bologna Process was a lengthy and messy affair, due to the peculiarities of the Portuguese political system. The results of a survey conducted after the initial implementation period suggested that the implementation of Bologna in Portugal had been achieved in name only. The very short period given to the first round of presentation of Bologna-type programmes and the fact that some legislation was still missing contributed to an implementation in form rather than in substance. We observed inconsistencies, such as contradictions between the overall assessment of the process of adaptation and establishment of new degree programmes and the details associated with its implementation; the lack of improvement of student/staff ratios; the superficial allocation of credits; the lack of a National Qualifications Framework; and difficulties in the curricular organisation. The fact that the leadership of most schools considered that professors still needed significant training to improve their pedagogic skills also showed that much needed to be done before a consistent paradigm shift was achieved. Additionally, it seemed clear that the Bologna goal in the perspective of Portuguese higher education institutions was linked much more to the pedagogic paradigm shift than to the Bologna goals of promoting employability and mobility.

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Employability

INTRODUCTION

Employability has been an objective of the Bologna Process from the very beginning. The countries that signed the Bologna Declaration of 1999 specifically endorsed employability as an ambitious and shared goal. In Chap. 3, we showed that the Bologna Process did not necessarily represent a watershed in European higher education policy. It was not an alpha moment (Neave 2009) as far as policy priorities were concerned, but arose in continuation of previous developments and tendencies in higher education policy already observed in European countries. Similarly, employability was far from a newfound ambition discovered by the Bologna Process. It was a theme already important to member states, and Bologna's contribution was to hoist it up to supranational prominence by giving it pan-European legitimacy and relevance (Sin and Neave 2014). Its mounting significance is evident in the ministerial communiqués issued at two-year intervals since the Declaration, up until the latest Bologna conference (2015). The economic crisis that has been affecting Europe since around 2008 has been another factor in helping bring employability forward as a priority. Although the European Commission had been promoting a utilitarian mission for higher education since the turn of the century (European Commission 2005, 2006, 2011), the increase in youth unemployment triggered by the economic downturn heightened political actors' awareness of the potential role higher education could play in

combating these trends. As a result, many governments have stressed the 'necessity for higher education to respond to economic and social needs, enhance the employability of graduates, including via a stronger focus on entrepreneurship and innovation and on strengthening university-business partnerships' (Sursock 2015: 11).

According to the Bologna Declaration (1999), the establishment of a cycle-based system of easily readable and comparable degrees was intended to promote European citizens' employability. The ambition expressed in the Declaration was that the first cycle, of minimum three years, should also be 'relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification'. The degrees' fitness for purpose for market demands became a common theme in the subsequent communiqués. Early on, the relevance of degrees at all levels was understood as meeting economic needs for highly qualified candidates. From the Berlin Communiqué (2003) onwards, however, after the realisation that the first cycle's acceptance posed problems, the discourse refocused around improving employability to address graduate unemployment. This concern became more pronounced as economic conditions deteriorated. Communiqués started to urge dialogue between HEIs, employers and governments, to both clarify the first cycle's nature and purpose and enhance graduate employability. As a step in this direction, an employer organisation (UNICE, later renamed BUSINESSEUROPE) was invited onto the Bologna Follow-Up Group.

Little attempt was made by higher education ministers to clarify the meaning of employability for the greater part of Bologna's first decade. The topic figured only as a high-level goal and driver for ideological reform. Only in 2007 did ministers acknowledge that guidance was necessary. The Bologna Follow-Up Group was asked 'to consider in more detail how to improve employability in relation to each of the cycles' (London Communiqué 2007: 6). A working group was drawn up and paid particular attention to the first cycle. It recommended *inter alia*: awareness-raising of the Bologna Process and the first cycle's value; more sustained dialogue between higher education institutions and employers, with governments acting as facilitators; development of employability skills through curricular review and in cooperation with employers; and, finally, provision of guidance to students. Subsequent ministerial communiqués at Leuven (2009) and Bucharest (2012) recommended ways of addressing employability, such as the acquisition of 'transversal, multidisciplinary and innovation' skills; the development of learning outcomes and 'inter-

national reference points' for different subject areas in cooperation with student and employer organisations; work placements as part of study programmes and on-the-job learning; and career- and employment-related guidance. The failure to set a clear definition of employability—a 'weasel word' (Amaral and Neave 2009) in the *pays politique*—led the various interest groups in the Bologna Process to come up with their own understanding of the concept. Academics, students and employers each interpreted the concept in keeping with their particular agendas (Sin and Neave 2014).

In the following we will explore employability in a Portuguese context, with emphasis on the consequences of the Bologna reforms on the employability of first-cycle graduates. We work with the employability definition proposed in the context of the Bologna Process: 'the ability to gain initial meaningful employment, or to become self-employed, to maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the labour market' (Working Group on Employability 2009: 5). This is clearly an employment-focused definition rather than one focused on skills and competences (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2014). To begin with, we present national statistics on the evolution of degrees and graduate unemployment, which can shed light on the employability of the Portuguese first degree (*licenciatura*). We then sound the perceptions of academics, employers and students. We look at the initiatives undertaken by higher education institutions and academics to improve employability. We then examine employers' understanding of the new qualifications and their willingness to employ first-cycle graduates, as well as their cooperation with institutions in activities destined to enhance employability. Finally, we consider student perceptions of the employability of the *licenciatura*, their intended destinations after the first degree and what they do to improve their employability.

Employability in Portuguese Higher Education

In Portugal, the employability agenda for higher education institutions was foregrounded by the implementation of the Bologna Process and, specifically, the new degree architecture. The reorganisation of the degree framework (Law 49/2005) abolished the previous four academic degrees (*bacharelato*, *licenciatura*, master and doctorate) and replaced them with three (*licenciatura*, master and doctorate) in accordance to the Bologna recommendations. Decree-Law 74/2006 then approved the organisation

of higher education into three cycles, defined by student competences based on the Dublin descriptors and by credits. The decree required the alignment of all study programmes with the Bologna cycles by the end of the academic year 2009/10, but many programmes had already adopted the new structure prior to the deadline.

The first cycle, the new *licenciatura*, has proved the most problematic from the standpoint of employability. Its reduction to three years in most cases (as opposed to four to six years before Bologna) undermined its value in the perspective of both students and academics. As a result, the master degree appears to have become the standard higher education degree. In contrast to its previous standing as an advanced postgraduate research-based qualification, the master degree nowadays appears as an initial training qualification, replacing the former *licenciatura* as the degree that commands recognition and esteem among academics and students (Sin 2012). Cardoso et al. (2012: 87) noted the view, widely held within higher education institutions, that work opportunities arose only after the second cycle. Moreover, institutions had high expectations that students would continue to study for a second cycle (Veiga and Amaral 2009). Having sounded professional bodies and associations, Cardoso et al. found that the majority tended to recognise that education up to the second cycle (master or integrated master) was necessary if graduates were to take up qualified professional activity. The *licenciatura* was generally regarded as appropriate and suitable for more technical areas such as accounting or human resource management. Still, practice-based in-service and ongoing training was expected during employment (Cardoso et al. 2012: 97). The steep increase in the number of graduates of second cycle masters and integrated masters since the implementation of the Bologna Process in 2006/07 until 2012/13 (Table 7.1) suggests, indeed, that the master degree has gained more and more terrain.

Data on graduate employment after the first and second cycle and students' destination after the first cycle could shed light on the perceived value of the *licenciatura* for the labour market. In this sense, Cardoso et al. (2012) set out to investigate graduate employment and trajectories, drawing on two sources: the Register of Enrolled Students and Higher Education Graduates (RAIDES), available from the General Directorate for Education and Science Statistics (DGEEC), and the Employment Survey of the National Statistics Institute. However, they came across a major limitation: the lack of quality information in order to make a reliable evaluation of the employability of higher education graduates. The attempt

Table 7.1 Graduates by qualification in the period 2000/01 and 2012/13

Year	Bacharelato	%	Licenciatura	%	Pre-Bologna master	%	Second cycle (Bologna) master	%	Integrated master	%	PhD	%	Total	%
2000/01	11,465	22.7%	36,273	71.8%	2207	4.4%					585	1.2%	50,530	100%
2001/02	10,626	20.1%	39,179	74.2%	2326	4.4%					665	1.3%	52,796	100%
2002/03	10,897	18.8%	43,394	74.8%	2885	5.0%					838	1.4%	58,014	100%
2003/04	12,155	20.3%	43,886	73.1%	3068	5.1%					895	1.5%	60,004	100%
2004/05	13,035	20.7%	45,771	72.7%	3152	5.0%					998	1.6%	62,956	100%
2005/06	12,762	19.6%	47,131	72.2%	4248	6.5%					1094	1.7%	65,235	100%
2006/07	8748	11.2%	62,000	79.2%	4769	6.1%	554	0.7%	984	1.3%	1269	1.6%	78,324	100%
2007/08	3230	4.0%	64,495	80.5%	3578	4.5%	2696	3.4%	4831	6.0%	1285	1.6%	80,115	100%
2008/09	762	1.0%	54,940	75.1%	3109	4.3%	6260	8.6%	6782	9.3%	1267	1.7%	73,120	100%
2009/10	19	0.0%	53,580	71.9%	1513	2.0%	11,002	14.8%	7029	9.4%	1414	1.9%	74,557	100%
2010/11	3	0.0%	51,504	68.4%	229	0.3%	14,504	19.3%	7420	9.9%	1608	2.1%	75,268	100%
2011/12	1	0.0%	50,952	64.5%	32	0.0%	18,335	23.2%	7797	9.9%	1859	2.4%	78,976	100%
2012/13	0	0.0%	51,470	65.2%	38	0.0%	17,278	21.9%	7698	9.8%	2463	3.1%	78,947	100%

Source: DGEEC

to get a clear idea of graduates' trajectories presented a number of obstacles: the lack of individual indicators in RAIDES; the failure on the part of institutions to fill in information on their students' previous degrees; and the fact that job centres only hold registers of those who have decided to enrol there, therefore not representing the unemployed population as a whole. Therefore, although Cardoso et al. (2012) intended to investigate rates of graduate employment after the first and second cycles, as well as the proportions of those who continue education or make the transition to work on completion of the *licenciatura*, the primary data they came across was patchy and incomplete. To address these shortcomings, a data collection instrument is currently being developed. It will articulate with national databases on higher education students and will allow the monitoring of trajectories after graduation.

Notwithstanding the data limitations, a possible indication of the depreciation of the value of the *licenciatura* for the labour market emerges from a comparison between Table 7.1 and Table 7.2. The percentage of unemployed first-cycle degree holders in the total number of graduates (over 80%) is higher when compared to the percentage of first-cycle graduates in the few years preceding the unemployment statistics of any one year (65–70%). At the same time, the percentage of unemployed master degree holders is lower when compared to the percentage of master degree graduates in the few years preceding the unemployment statistics: for example, while master graduates amount to around 30% of all graduates over the past three years (2011–2013) only 8.9–12.9% of the

Table 7.2 Unemployed graduates' percentages by degree level in the period 2006–2014

Year	Bacharelato	licenciatura	Master	PhD	Total
2006	15.4%	83.6%	0.8%	0.2%	100.0%
2007	12.6%	86.0%	1.2%	0.2%	100.0%
2008	9.9%	87.7%	2.2%	0.2%	100.0%
2009	8.7%	87.4%	3.7%	0.2%	100.0%
2010	7.7%	87.2%	5.0%	0.2%	100.0%
2011	6.6%	87.3%	5.9%	0.2%	100.0%
2012	5.5%	85.4%	8.9%	0.2%	100.0%
2013	4.9%	82.6%	12.1%	0.4%	100.0%
2014	5.3%	81.3%	12.9%	0.5%	100.0%

Source: IEFP

graduates registered in job centres in the years following the graduation (2012–2014) as master graduates.

The difference in percentages between the longer-term unemployment for *licenciatura* graduates and master graduates is also indicative of the latter's better employment prospects. From the total population of unemployed master students, the percentages of master students in this situation 12 to 24 months after graduation, and even more noticeably more than 24 months after graduation, is consistently lower than the corresponding percentages for *licenciatura* graduates in the years following the implementation of the Bologna Process (see Table 7.3).

For example, in December 2010, 9.4% of unemployed *licenciatura* graduates had been in this situation for over two years, as opposed to 5.9% of unemployed master graduates. In December 2013, the rates were 13.2% versus 6.5%.

As mentioned above, these statistics only include those individuals who have voluntarily registered with a job centre, so they cannot be considered fully reliable. Additionally, the lack of disaggregation between the types of

Table 7.3 Unemployed *licenciatura* and master graduates by duration of unemployment (2006–2014)

Year	Degree	<3 months	3–6 months	6–12 months	12–24 months	>24 months	Total
Dec 2006	Licenciatura	30.3%	33.4%	14.7%	16.5%	5.1%	100.0%
	Master	28.2%	25.4%	15.1%	23.6%	7.7%	100.0%
Dec 2007	Licenciatura	30.0%	29.1%	17.3%	16.4%	7.2%	100.0%
	Master	35.4%	20.4%	17.3%	17.5%	9.4%	100.0%
Dec 2008	Licenciatura	33.1%	26.7%	17.3%	15.2%	7.7%	100.0%
	Master	44.1%	25.0%	12.7%	11.1%	7.0%	100.0%
Dec 2009	Licenciatura	30.7%	25.9%	19.3%	16.2%	7.9%	100.0%
	Master	42.8%	25.1%	17.0%	10.2%	5.0%	100.0%
Dec 2010	Licenciatura	27.6%	27.0%	18.4%	17.6%	9.4%	100.0%
	Master	35.8%	26.4%	17.9%	14.0%	5.9%	100.0%
Dec 2011	Licenciatura	30.9%	29.8%	15.1%	15.2%	9.0%	100.0%
	Master	42.8%	25.3%	14.1%	11.7%	6.1%	100.0%
Dec 2012	Licenciatura	22.4%	29.4%	18.4%	20.8%	8.9%	100.0%
	Master	32.1%	27.5%	20.7%	14.2%	5.4%	100.0%
Dec 2013	Licenciatura	23.4%	22.0%	17.3%	24.1%	13.2%	100.0%
	Master	34.1%	22.0%	18.8%	18.6%	6.5%	100.0%
Jun 2014	Licenciatura	20.7%	15.5%	23.5%	24.4%	15.8%	100.0%
	Master	24.4%	21.8%	23.9%	20.6%	9.4%	100.0%

Source: IEFP

licenciatura and the types of master degree (pre- or post-Bologna) held by the registered individuals is a further limitation of the data. Nonetheless, the data illustrate the labour market's tendency to value the master degree over the *licenciatura*. To corroborate this, the remuneration bonus associated to higher education degrees has, in the *licenciatura*'s case, lost relevance between 2002 and 2009, suggesting that the implementation of the Bologna Process caused 'a certain devaluation' of the first cycle (Cardoso et al. 2012). At the same time, it appears that master degree-holders benefit from higher salaries (Queirós 2012).

The prevalence of graduate unemployment among the younger generations—under 35 (Table 7.4)—could be sending signals that higher education degrees are losing their value as positional goods (Marginson 1998), as the value of higher education has been questioned lately as a consequence of the economic crisis severely affecting Portugal since 2009.

Nonetheless, the comparison between graduates and people with secondary or primary education suggests it is still an investment worth making (Table 7.5). Higher education graduates represent 22.6% of the total active population, yet they represent only 16.5% of the unemployed. Compared to the proportion of unemployed individuals with secondary education or less, higher education graduates are in a more favourable position. Against 17.3% unemployment among those who completed primary education, or 14.7% among those who completed secondary education, only 10.1% of higher education graduates are unemployed.

Another factor is the salary levels, considerably higher in the case of graduates (Pordata 2015). The difference in remuneration between

Table 7.4 Distribution of unemployed graduates by age groups

Year	<25 years	25–34 years	35–54 years	≥55 years	Total
Dec 2006	18.2%	57.5%	19.9%	4.4%	100.0%
Dec 2007	20.9%	54.1%	20.9%	4.0%	100.0%
Dec 2008	22.1%	50.3%	23.6%	4.0%	100.0%
Dec 2009	20.4%	49.8%	26.1%	3.7%	100.0%
Dec 2010	19.3%	47.9%	29.1%	3.7%	100.0%
Dec 2011	15.0%	47.8%	33.3%	3.8%	100.0%
Dec 2012	15.4%	46.2%	34.8%	3.5%	100.0%
Dec 2013	17.4%	42.5%	36.3%	3.9%	100.0%
Jun 2014	13.5%	41.3%	40.4%	4.8%	100.0%

Source: IEFP

Table 7.5   Unemployment values by level of education in June 2014

Education level	Unemployed		Active population		Unemployed/ Active population
	N (10³)	%	N (10³)	%	
None	18.9	2.6%	125.6	2.4%	15.0
Primary—first cycle	105.9	14.5%	830.0	15.8%	12.8
Primary—second cycle	102.8	14.1%	708.8	13.5%	14.5
Primary—third cycle	196.0	26.9%	1 135.0	21.6%	17.3
Secondary and post-secondary	185.3	25.4%	1 259.3	24.0%	14.7
Higher education	120.1	16.5%	1 184.7	22.6%	10.1
Total	728.9	100.0%	5 243.5	100.0%	13.9

Source: National Statistics Institute

graduates and non-graduates in Portugal is, in fact, the second highest in Europe (Valente Rosa and Chitas 2011). This suggests that a higher education degree is still valuable from an employment perspective, despite high unemployment among graduates.

A more pertinent question for us refers to the value of different levels of higher education qualifications. Similar to what national data suggest, a recent study (Sin et al. forthcoming) suggested that the value of the *licenciatura* as a positional good had indeed diminished in favour of the master degree. Thus, bearing in mind the vulnerability of the young population to unemployment as well as the higher unemployment rates for first-cycle (*licenciatura*) degree holders, in the following we discuss the perceptions and activities of those actors who are in a position to contribute to the development of graduate employability: academics, employers and students. Specifically, we look at the assimilation of the employability agenda, perceptions of the employability of the *licenciatura*, initiatives undertaken by higher education institutions, employers and students with a view to enhancing employability, and the employers' understanding of the new qualifications combined with their willingness to employ first-cycle graduates.

Higher Education Institutions and Academics

Similar to trends in higher education institutions across Europe (Sin and Neave 2014), graduate employability has also become a priority for Portuguese higher education institutions as an expression of their 'social

responsibility' (Cardoso et al. 2012: 86), but also driven by external requirements posed by accreditation processes. In the following we will look at how employability is approached, first at the central institutional level and then at the ground level by lay academics.

Institutional Commitment to Employability

As regards the institutional level, a recent study (Cardoso et al. 2012) carried out a comprehensive analysis of the prominence of employability/ entrepreneurship in Portuguese higher education institutions. The majority (64%) had an employability or entrepreneurship unit, yet the visibility of these units on the institutions' website displayed differences, indicative of the importance of employability/entrepreneurship as an image and branding element. In this sense, greater visibility was conferred to these aspects by private institutions compared to public institutions, and by universities compared to polytechnics. However, the higher profile of employability in universities as far as institutional image is concerned is not matched by a similar involvement of academics in the university sector with practices meant to develop employability. As will be shown further down, at the level of practical action, academics in polytechnic institutions are more engaged with employability. A clear difference between the public and private sector was the remit of units, exclusively employability in the latter, while in the public sector around 10% had a remit for entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, entrepreneurship units were found to have little openness to the external environment, investing little in creating partnerships, in gathering information about employment needs, and in granting attention to internationalisation.

Furthermore, the study found that private institutions were more active than public institutions in various areas: publication and dissemination of job opportunities; information about personalised career guidance and assistance to students in the search for jobs or internships; investigation of the needs of potential employers; identification of work opportunities with employers and organisation of job fairs; and professional training activities. According to Cardoso et al. (2012), private institutions' higher efforts aim to compensate for the likely disadvantage confronting their students in the labour market in relation to their counterparts from the more prestigious public sector. Studies on graduate destinations and labour market insertion are also more common in the private sector as opposed to the public sector, and in universities as opposed to polytechnics. Universities were

also found to be more active in offering professional training courses to their students. As they provide education of an academic nature compared to the vocational nature of polytechnic education, universities are likely to more acutely experience the pressure to work towards the employability of their graduates whose employment destinations are more blurred than polytechnic graduates. The lack of studies about labour market needs was common to all types of institutions (Cardoso et al. 2012: 90).

Academics' Commitment to Employability

Moving from the central institutional level to ground-floor academics, the attention granted to employability seems to grow weaker. The results of the aforementioned survey of 684 academics between autumn 2013 and spring 2014 revealed a variable degree of activity within study programmes towards the development of employability (Sin and Amaral 2016). Among other issues, the survey sounded academics about the changes they had made to degrees and courses they taught with the aim of improving students' employability after the implementation of the Bologna reforms. Academics had to indicate if they had reviewed curricula; had involved employers and professional bodies in curricular review; had raised awareness of the new bachelors among employers; had explicitly identified student learning outcomes and competences; paid attention to transferable skills; or included work internships in the curriculum. These items were based on the actions suggested in the Bologna communiqués as well as those identified in the Trends reports of the European University Association as means of improving student employability (Crosier et al. 2007; Sursock and Smidt 2010).

The most common activities revealed by the survey were curricular review (82.2% of academics), attention to transferable skills (67.6%), inclusion of work internships (61.9%) and explicit identification of learning outcomes and competences (61.6%) (Sin and Amaral 2016). The involvement of employers and professional bodies in curricular review, indicated by around a third of academics, emerged rather inferior compared to the previous items. This latter fact is a poor match to other European countries. A survey of institutions across Europe (Sursock 2015) found that 54% involved professional associations and employers occasionally in curriculum development, while a further 24% declared 'close' involvement. Higher education sectors displayed differences worth highlighting. Academics in polytechnics were significantly more active than in universities as regards

to the explicit identification of learning outcomes, attention to transferable skills, or the involvement of employers in curricular review (Sin and Amaral 2016). Several reasons explain this difference. First, when they were established, Portuguese polytechnic institutions' mission contemplated close links to the local economy (Amaral et al. 2002: 57), rendering them more sensitive and responsive to the needs of the latter. Second, the vocational, competence-based nature of polytechnic courses has facilitated undertaking these activities. Last but not least, studying in a polytechnic institution carries less guarantee of employment than in a university (Almeida and Vieira 2012), explaining why polytechnics might feel a greater urge to improve their graduates' employability.

Differences emerged, too, between the public and the private sector (Sin and Amaral 2016). The percentages of 'yes' answers were consistently higher for private sector academics, with the greatest differences in the case of the inclusion of work internships in the curriculum and of curricular review. This suggests a higher level of collaboration with employers and greater attention to employability in the private sector, corroborating the findings by Cardoso et al. (2012). Cardoso and colleagues already referred to private institutions' efforts to give their students a competitive advantage over public sector students. We put forward a complementary interpretation. The higher concern with employability and the tighter relationship with industrial actors are also fostered as a strategy to attract students. Aware of their lower appeal for potential entrants compared to public sector institutions (Tavares 2013), and the higher rates of unemployment among private sector graduates (Almeida and Vieira 2012), private sector institutions promote employability as a way of enticing students with an additional guarantee about the likelihood of getting a job after graduation.

For all types of institutions, the actions for raising awareness among employers of the new *licenciatura* emerged as particularly poor (25.3%) (Sin and Amaral 2016). This echoes European-wide concerns of the student body (European Students' Union 2009) that, after the changes to the degree structure, hardly any effort was put into promoting the new degrees among employers. This might be explained by the academics' scepticism about the value of the new *licenciatura* on the labour market. The above-mentioned survey undertaken in 2013–2014 revealed that 72.2% believed that the implementation of the Bologna reforms did not promote the employability of the *licenciatura*. This is a disturbing finding, considering that academics were at the heart of the enactment

of the Bologna reforms and were thus deeply involved in the transformation of the degrees. They are the actors with best knowledge about the new degrees, as also revealed by the fact that only a small percentage (14%) felt unsure about the effects of Bologna on the employability of the first degree. The reservation about the first degree's relevance for the labour market is another issue mirrored at European level. The Trends 2010 report asked a pertinent question: 'If higher education institutions, as the key actors of the change, are not convinced of the value of the first degree, how can they expect to convince employers?' (Sursock and Smidt 2010: 40) As for employers, de Weert (2007) spoke of their desire for more information, triggered by the Bologna reforms, about what a specific degree would produce and how it was related to degrees elsewhere.

Employer Perceptions and Engagement with Higher Education

A survey centred on the employability of the first degree following the Bologna reforms was also administered to employers. Reiterating what we already said in Chap. 6, the survey targeted only employers belonging to large businesses and employer associations, which were more likely to be interested in graduate employability and to collaborate with higher education. Surveyed employers fell into two categories: industry, and trade and services.

Out of the 64 employers that responded to the survey, almost a quarter (23.6%)—with similar percentages for the two employer categories—reported missing knowledge about the consequences of the Bologna reforms on the employability of the *licenciatura*. Again, this finding mirrors the concerns voiced at the European level that employers remain generally unaware of the new degrees and that little has been done to communicate with them about the value and purpose of the new qualifications.

Negative opinions prevailed for both employer categories, but trade and services employers were less negative than industry employers (Table 7.6). Their lower pessimism stands out: 46.7% believed that the Bologna reforms did not benefit *licenciatura* graduates, against 60% for industrial employers. This was matched by the trade and services employers' higher optimism: 30% believed that the implementation of the Bologna three-cycle system contributed to promote the employability of *licenciatura* graduates (against 16% for industrial employers). Vieira and

Table 7.6 Employers' perceptions, in percentages, about whether the implementation of the Bologna three-cycle system contributed to the promotion of the employability of *licenciatura* graduates

Employer category	Yes	No	Don't know/No opinion	Total
Confederation of Portuguese Industry	16.0%	60.0%	24.0%	100.0%
Portuguese Confederation of Trade and Services	30.0%	46.7%	23.3%	100.0%
Total	23.6%	52.7%	23.6%	100.0%

Marques (2014) also detected some variation in employer perceptions. They found that the foreshortening of the first cycle after implementation of the Bologna Process has generally led to employer preferences for the pre-Bologna first degree, because it is associated with greater student maturity. Yet, discourses about the desirability of longer education were not uniform. Employing graduates of the new post-Bologna *licenciatura* was seen as offering advantages in that these graduates were more malleable and easy to mould to fit the employers' demands (Vieira and Marques 2014: 33). Cardoso et al. (2012: 97) also found some variation in the discourse of professional bodies and associations. The majority recognised that education up to the second cycle (master or integrated master) was necessary for graduates to perform qualified professional activity. Yet, the *licenciatura* was generally regarded as appropriate for more applied areas, such as accounting or human resource management.

Although trade and services employers appeared more positive about the employability of *licenciatura* graduates, the differences between the willingness of the two respondent categories to employ *licenciatura* graduates were minor (64% versus 60%). Such contradictory insights among trades and services employers might be related to the larger proportions of withheld opinions compared to the industrial employers (23.3%). In turn, this might again pinpoint their deficient understanding of degrees. Trade and services employers, to a larger extent, seemed unsure of *licenciatura* graduates' abilities upon completion of the degree (Table 7.7).

Portuguese employers apparently lack knowledge about higher education institutions' internal undertakings meant to develop students' employability (Sin and Amaral 2016). Additionally, the employers' own evaluation of their participation in activities undertaken by higher education institutions has revealed low levels of cooperation. The only activities

Table 7.7 Employers' perceptions, in percentages, about their willingness to employ students who, after the implementation of the Bologna Process, have completed only the *licenciatura*

Employer category	Yes	No	Don't know/ No opinion	Total
Confederation of Portuguese Industry	64.0%	20.0%	16.0%	100.0%
Portuguese Confederation of Trade and Services	60.0%	16.7%	23.3%	100.0%
Total		61.8%	18.2% 20.0%	100.0%

with significant participation were work internships, indicated by over half of surveyed employers (53.2%), and student visits to their organisations, indicated by around a third of those surveyed (32.3%) (Sin and Amaral 2016). In contrast, participation in curricular design/review or in internal or external quality assurance reviews scored very low.

These facts point to the embryonic stage of collaboration between higher education institutions and economic actors in Portugal. Cardoso et al. (2012: 98–99) recently reported the perceptions of professional bodies and associations that employers and higher education institutions have so far existed as worlds apart. No formal articulation was noted in the case of several professional bodies, either in relation to employability or any other matter, and higher education was seen as inward-looking. Although professional bodies offered training to recent graduates to deal with perceived shortcomings in their readiness for work, this has no articulation or integration in higher education curricula, with the exception of compulsory internships. As a positive point, bodies noted, nonetheless, the progressive revision of curricula through the introduction of elements meant to ensure a better adaptation of graduates to the labour market (Cardoso et al. 2012: 91–92). Over a decade ago, employers were already identified as the 'most absent' stakeholders in higher education (Amaral et al. 2002: 56). Yet, despite the ever more insistent calls for a better articulation between higher education and the economy, called for equally by European and national level policies, the status-quo apparently changed little. Thus, in the Portuguese context, employers are yet to play the significant role, envisaged by policy makers, in the internal undertakings of higher education institutions, not least in relation to improving student employability.

In order to raise awareness and promote the usage of the new degrees, the implementation of the Bologna Process has been advocating some elements that would render degrees more transparent and readable, not only for the academic and student communities but also for the society at large, employers included. Such elements are the ECTS credit system, the learning outcomes, the Diploma Supplement and the qualifications framework. Additionally, to establish public confidence in the degrees, new national systems of quality assurance have been introduced across Europe under the umbrella of the Bologna Process. A survey asked employers to rate, on a scale from 1 to 5, the extent to which these new degree descriptors helped them to evaluate graduates' employability. They were also given the option of withholding opinion in relation to each individual item. Indeed, a high percentage of employers chose this option, especially in the case of industry employers (between 40 and 48% depending on the item; see Table 7.8). The high proportions of withheld opinions are worrying, suggesting that, despite the best intentions of the *pays politique*, the effects in the *pays réel*, registering little impact of the Bologna reforms, are far from meeting expectations. The findings also suggest that the mere implementation or adoption of structural descriptors are insufficient and generate little effect outside the higher education community. This entails that more communication and involvement with employers (and the wider society) is necessary to improve their knowledge of qualifications and of the attributes and competences graduates acquire during a higher education degree.

Table 7.8 Percentages of employers who lacked knowledge or withheld opinion in relation to how far the above elements facilitated the understanding of graduate employability

Employer category	Credit system (ECTS)	Learning outcomes	Diploma supplement	National quality assurance (Higher Education Assessment and Accreditation Agency activities)	National qualifications framework
Confederation of Portuguese Industry	48.0%	48.0%	48.0%	44.0%	40.0%
Portuguese Confederation of Trade and Services	26.7%	26.7%	30.0%	26.7%	26.7%
Total	36.4%	36.4%	38.2%	34.5%	32.7%

Table 7.9 Employers' perceptions, expressed in means, about the extent to which specific Bologna elements helped their understanding of the employability of *licenciatura* graduates

Employer category	Credit system (ECTS)	Learning outcomes	Diploma supplement	National quality assurance (Higher Education Assessment and Accreditation Agency activities)	National qualifications framework
Confederation of Portuguese Industry	3.38	3.92	3.62	3.86	3.73
Portuguese Confederation of Trade and Services	2.82	3.36	3.05	3.32	3.32
Total	3.03	3.57	3.26	3.53	3.49

For those employers who rated how far the above elements helped them to understand the employability of graduates, the means were comprised between 3.03 and 3.57 (Table 7.9). The credit system was the least helpful for their understanding of graduate employability, while the learning outcomes were deemed the most useful. The explicit identification of student learning outcomes and competences was, in fact, mentioned by academics as one of the areas in which they put most effort in order to develop students' employability. This may have paid off to some extent, judging by employers' responses.

The national qualifications framework and the national quality assurance activities carried out by the A3ES also seem to help employers gauge the employability of graduates: the former, probably due to the explicitness of the achievements of students holding a certain qualification, similar to the learning outcomes approach; the latter probably because the scrutiny applied to the quality of educational programmes, in operation since 2010, has generated confidence among the public at large about the quality of degrees.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND INITIATIVES

The economic crisis that hit Portugal in 2009 has led to soaring unemployment and has affected higher education graduates and non-graduates equally, although the former to a lesser extent. The absorption of

graduates by the economy has proved, at best, problematic over the past decade. As shown in the beginning of this chapter, national statistics on graduate unemployment in Portugal, published by the Institute for Employment and Professional Training (IEFP), reveal that young graduates encounter difficulties in entering the labour market. According to the most recent national data on graduate unemployment (June 2014), unemployed graduates are predominantly young (54.75% were under 35). Surveys conducted by higher education institutions have also pointed to the increasing number of graduates experiencing unemployment and insecure positions in the labour market. These surveys also found that the time spent finding a job after graduation tended to become longer after 2000, compared to the 1990s (Edvardsson Stiwne and Alves 2010).

It has been almost a decade since the implementation of the Bologna Process and the emergence of employability as a hot topic in Portuguese higher education. In a dire economic context and increased competition for scarce jobs, what do students think of the employability of the first degree? Students' choices on completion of the *licenciatura* could shed further light on these perceptions. Entering the job market could be interpreted as a sign of confidence in the worth of the *licenciatura*. However, the increase in the number of post-Bologna master graduates in recent years (and their increasing proportion among graduates), combined with a constant number of *licenciatura* graduates (and their decreasing proportion; see Table 7.1), suggest that the master degree has become an increasingly preferred choice among first degree holders. From an employability perspective, Vieira and Marques (2014) found that graduates perceived the master degree as a worthy investment because it both improved the access to and prepared them better for the labour market. The study also found that graduates holding a master degree had a higher probability of securing paid employment. Graduates' opinion seems to echo the public opinion, which perceives the master degree as a condition for success in the labour market, while the *licenciatura* is deemed insufficient (A. R. Silva 2015; S. Silva 2015). The existence of integrated masters in many disciplines, especially those related to the regulated professions, implying students' automatic progression from the first to the second cycle, seems to reveal a certain degree of valorisation of the second cycle.

Surveyed Portuguese students (see Chap. 6 for further detail) were found to be sceptical about the employability of *licenciatura* holders (Sin et al. forthcoming). Some differences were noted (Table 7.10), which were consistent with other research findings about the specificities of

Table 7.10 Students' perceptions, in percentages, about whether the implementation of the Bologna three-cycle system contributed to the promotion of the employability of *licenciatura* graduates

Student groups	Yes	No	Don't know/ No opinion	Total
Higher education sector				
University	20.8%	57.6%	21.6%	100.0%
Polytechnic	26.2%	61.9%	11.9%	100.0%
Public	20.9%	58.9%	20.2%	100.0%
Private	29.5%	54.7%	15.8%	100.0%
Gender				
Male	25.1%	57.1%	17.8%	100.0%
Female	18.9%	59.7%	21.4%	100.0%
Study level				
Licenciatura	25.3%	53.2%	21.5%	100.0%
Master	18.0%	64.8%	17.2%	100.0%

institutional types—public/private and university/polytechnic—and their approaches in relation to the topic of employability and employer cooperation (Amaral et al. 2002; Cardoso et al. 2012; Sin and Amaral 2016).

Thus, students from universities (and the public sector) emerged as the groups most unsure (about one-fifth) about how the new degree structure influenced the employability of the *licenciatura*. In contrast, only 11.9% of students from the polytechnic sector withheld opinion, suggesting they are better informed about the labour market's attitude towards the *licenciatura*. This might be due not only to the vocational orientation of the polytechnic sector, but also to its greater efforts to raise awareness of the new *licenciatura* among employers and to involve them in curricular reviews (Sin and Amaral 2016). Enrolling in a master degree was the top choice among university students (64.6%), while large numbers of polytechnic students (46.3%) intended to start working rather than enrol in a master degree (37.4%) (Sin et al. forthcoming). Again, this could be interpreted against the polytechnic sector's mission, which, ever since its creation, has been to respond to local economic needs (Magalhães et al. 2009).

As for differences between public and private institutions, private sector students seemed more optimistic than public sector students about the employability of the *licenciatura* following Bologna. The former also appeared more prone to continue studying compared to the latter.

While interest in the study area was the main reason for enrolment in a master degree—two-thirds or more across higher education sectors—it is noteworthy that the second reason mentioned by all groups of students was their feeling of unpreparedness to enter the labour market. The only exceptions were master students from private institutions: only 14.7% of these felt unprepared for the labour market (Sin et al. forthcoming). A likely explanation for the greater optimism of private sector students resides in the wide range of activities private institutions carry out in order to improve their students' employability: support and guidance to students in job search; identification of work opportunities with employers, including through organisation of job fairs; and professional training activities (Cardoso et al. 2012). Private sector institutions were also found to collaborate more closely with employers in the provision of internships (Sin and Amaral 2014). Arguably, these efforts seek to compensate for the disadvantage that private sector students could face in the labour market in relation to their counterparts from the more prestigious public sector. Overall, students also referred to, as reasons to enrol in a master degree, the poor employability of the *licenciatura* (predominantly among public university students), the compulsory nature of the master in their chosen profession, and the fact that the programme was an integrated master.

Female students were more negative about the employability of the *licenciatura* than male students (18.9% versus 25.1%) after the reorganisation of the degree framework. This is no wonder when faced with figures on unemployment by gender, which expose women's greater vulnerability on the labour market. In December 2013, 33.1% of unemployed graduates were men, against 66.9% women (DGEEC 2013). Master students were less confident than *licenciatura* students about the effects of the Bologna Process on the employability of the first degree, which is as expected, since the former already made the decision to study after the first degree, presupposing that master students are more sceptical of the *licenciatura*'s value in the job market.

The surveyed students' perceptions raise questions about the nature of the *licenciatura* as a positional good in Portugal (Marginson 1998, 2006). The generally negative opinions about the employability of the *licenciatura* after implementation of the Bologna reforms, as well as the enrolment in a master degree as a the first option after graduation for the majority of students—across institutional type and gender—suggest a depreciation in the exchange value of the *licenciatura* on the job market. Indeed, a large proportion of *licenciatura* students (between 33.3% and

45.1%) felt unprepared to enter the labour market. Further research is necessary to understand whether this perceived unpreparedness is construed mainly against the precarious labour market and the scarcity of jobs, or whether it is determined by a perception of insufficient competences as a result of the curtailment of the *licenciatura*.

The curtailment also had the effect of raising the number of first-degree graduates (or what Tomlinson (2008) referred to as credentials inflation), already favoured by the massification of higher education. Since the legal implementation of Bologna in 2005/06 until 2012/13, the number of *licenciatura* graduates registered an increase of about 10%, from 47,131 to 51,470, suggesting it has become easier to attain. This implies tougher labour market competition for first-degree students and the fact that 'the stakes have been raised for what is needed to get jobs' (Tomlinson 2008: 50). Enrolling in a master degree is one way through which students can improve their relative position on the job market. But there are other ways that can enhance a student's positional advantage. Thus, Tomlinson (2007) refers to 'the discourse of experience' and the repackaging of the employability narrative that comprises not only hard credentials such as degrees, but also 'soft credentials' such as experiences and achievements outside formal university learning. Moreau and Leathwood (2006) add to the argument: the employers' inability to make decisions based on possession of a degree has led to a shift in preferences from academic credentials towards a holistic appreciation of an individual's attributes and personality.

Surveyed Portuguese students seemed aware that a degree had ceased to be a sufficient condition for labour market success and apparently appropriated the discourse of experience, as revealed by their relatively high engagement with extra-curricular activities: work related or not related to their field of study, volunteering, or participation in student associations (Sin et al. 2016). Study-related work, followed by volunteering, was the most common experience outside formal university learning. Volunteering registered great variation between disciplinary areas, and lower levels of volunteering were related to lower levels of extra-curricular activities overall. Students who engaged least with volunteering came from disciplinary areas such as Mathematics and Statistics, Computer Science or Engineering, which are the disciplines with the lowest unemployment rates (GPEARI/MCTES 2011). Also noteworthy, public university students appeared to be doing more work unrelated to their study area, and less work related to it, compared to the other students. In the case of polytechnic students, the vocational orientation of their education and the

closer link with the local labour market might explain the tighter match between studies and parallel work. In the case of private institutions, we saw that they place greater emphasis on establishing connections with employers, and this might be paying off dividends for their students in the nature of the extra-curricular work they engage with.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we aimed to investigate the consequences of the Bologna reforms on the employability of first-cycle graduates. National statistics on the evolution of degrees show a steep increase in the number of master degree graduates, while the number of graduates with the post-Bologna *licenciatura* has stayed constant. These point to a *licenciatura* that has been losing ground in favour of the master degree. Unemployment statistics suggest that the labour market also assigns more value to the master degree. Unemployment rates for *licenciatura* degree holders are higher than for master degree holders. The longer-term unemployment, more severe for *licenciatura* graduates than for master graduates, also illustrates the latter's better employment prospects.

In envisaging a first degree with occupational relevance for the labour market, the Bologna Process identified an important role for higher education institutions. Although the existence of an employability or entrepreneurship unit in the majority of Portuguese institutions (Cardoso et al. 2012) suggests the adoption of this agenda, closer scrutiny exposed unequal commitment to these new priorities. Private institutions are more active than public institutions in a range of areas such as personalised career guidance and assistance to students in the search for jobs or internships, or sounding the needs of potential employers. At ground level, academics have only partially internalised the employability agenda. The results of the recent survey with academic staff additionally revealed scepticism about the exchange value of the *licenciatura*, but at the same time found that insufficient measures had been taken within study programmes to develop students' employability (Sin and Amaral 2014). While a majority of academics declared to have undertaken curricular review or to have explicitly identified learning outcomes and competences, activities involving collaboration with employers had a rather low profile. Academics in private institutions and in polytechnics appeared more responsive to the employability agenda. The actions for raising awareness among employers of the new *licenciatura* emerged as particularly poor. Indeed, maybe the most evident finding in the case of employers was a

widespread lack of knowledge about the employability of the *licenciatura* and contradictory opinions about their willingness to employ first degree holders. The tools instituted by Bologna to make degrees more readable seemed to have had limited effect among employers so far.

Against these revelations, and bearing in mind the current context of the severe economic crisis, surveyed students' perceptions hardly came as a surprise (Sin et al. forthcoming). A majority of these students, irrespective of the type of institution they came from, were pessimistic about the employability of the *licenciatura*, more in the case of public sector students and university students. With the exception of polytechnic students, the majority were interested in enrolling in a master degree rather than in getting a job. Around one-third of students across all categories, excluding master students in private universities, justified this choice by a feeling of unpreparedness for the labour market. The master degree, as well as other extracurricular activities, is apparently perceived as bringing competitive advantage.

Summing up, we can argue that the employability objective of the Bologna Process—the relevance of *all* degree levels for the labour market—is far from being realised in Portugal. Scepticism prevails among academics, students and employers about the employability of the first degree. Institutions and academics appear insufficiently dedicated to the improvement of employability, although measures have been taken in this respect. Closer cooperation with employers in curricular review, and also better communicating to them the nature and competences associated to each degree, could, perhaps, make a difference in employers' acceptance of the *licenciatura*. We should nonetheless make a caveat in drawing these conclusions. Further research is necessary to illuminate the extent to which the oversupply of labour, favoured by the economic crisis, has also placed the *licenciatura* in an unfavourable light. How far is the *licenciatura* the victim of an adverse economic context? Under normal economic conditions, would its employability value look different?

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Mobility

INTRODUCTION

Mobility was featured as a key strategic objective in the construction of the EHEA, in the Bologna Declaration and in the regular ministerial communiqués that followed. One of the rationales behind the EHEA was to boost Europe's global competitiveness status through the greater transparency and comparability of degrees, thereby furthering the free movement of European citizens for purposes of both study and work. In this sense, the Bologna Process (and the European Commission) has advocated the mobility of both students and academic staff (teachers and researchers). The present chapter focuses exclusively on the topic of student mobility. It tackles mobility to and from Portugal, within the EHEA. Incoming mobility from countries outside the EHEA is dealt with in Chap. 9.

Presented as 'the basis for establishing the EHEA' (Berlin Communiqué 2003), mobility became 'the hallmark of the EHEA' (Leuven Communiqué 2009). Ministers of signatory states have constantly reiterated their commitment to removing barriers to free movement. They also committed to adopting recognition instruments (the ECTS or the Diploma Supplement) and to promoting growth in mobility. In 2009, a target was set: by 2020 at least 20 % of students graduating in the EHEA should have spent a period of study or training abroad (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué 2009).

Historically, the promotion of student mobility in the Bologna Process builds on European level initiatives to reduce the idiosyncrasies and isolation of national systems of higher education (Teichler 2012). It builds out from the Erasmus programme which facilitated student mobility, launched by the European Commission in 1987 with the aim of establishing a European level system of higher education (Papatsiba 2006). Mobility as promoted by the Bologna Process also incorporates recognition instruments proposed by the European Commission, such as the ECTS or the Diploma Supplement. The interlinking between the Bologna Process and the Commission's agendas discussed in previous chapters is evident in the case of mobility. For example, the European Commission (2005: 6) warned that 'sufficient compatibility between the different national regulations is indispensable in order to avoid breeding confusion rather than adding opportunities for citizen choice and mobility. Cross-recognition of qualifications and competencies demands a minimum level of organisation at European level in the form of common references and basic standards'. Thus, unsurprisingly, since the launch of the Bologna Process, mobility has featured prominently in the European Commission's priorities, too, as a way of fostering cooperation and interchange between member states. Three main ambitions have driven the European Commission's promotion of mobility and integration of higher education in Europe: enhancing a high-skilled labour force, promoting a deeper cultural integration and fostering a sense of European identity (González et al. 2011). Recently, student and staff mobility became integrated into the European Commission's internationalisation strategy (European Commission 2013).

This chapter examines how far European policy ambitions of mobility are materialising in Portugal. What is the status of student mobility a decade after the Bologna Process was enacted in Portuguese law in 2006? To answer this question, we first look at legislative measures in support of mobility, as well as national statistics on mobile students to and from Europe since the launch of the Bologna Process. Then, shifting from the national to the institutional level, we explore perceptions among academics and students about the impact of the Bologna Process on mobility in general. In particular, we explore the relevance and efficacy of mobility instruments, the perceived benefits and the unintended negative consequences of the Bologna Process in the area of mobility, and mobility obstacles and drivers.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

In Chap. 6, we referred to the implementation of the Bologna Process in Portugal as a messy and lengthy affair. Political instability and frequent changes of government in the years following the launch of the Process made engagement with Bologna problematic. A former Secretary of State described Portugal as experiencing 'black-out periods' (Sin 2012). The first piece of legislation marking the beginning of Portuguese engagement with the Bologna Process was Decree-Law 42/2005. It introduced the use of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement (MCTES 2005) as elements meant to promote mobility and employability. These elements were also compatible with the 1986 Education System Act still in force at the time. Specifically for mobility, the decree-law also adopted a European scale for grade comparability, the learning agreement, the academic record transcript, and the requirement that all institutions should draft and make available a self-description guide in Portuguese and English. However, even before legislation was passed, institutions had already started to make changes to their programmes to align them better to European ones, e.g. the introduction of ECTS. Different levels of institutional autonomy led to mixed success. Public universities, enjoying higher autonomy, were free to alter programmes. In contrast, polytechnic and private institutions needed ministerial approval, which was refused because of the absence of a legal framework to support the changes (Veiga et al. 2005) (see Chap. 6).

With the change of government in 2005, the implementation of the Bologna Process became a top priority, necessary to 'do away with the delay we have experienced in this area', according to the minister in charge of higher education (MCTES 2007a). A first piece of legislation laid the foundation stone for the new degree structure: Law 49/2005 (MCTES 2005) abolished the previous four higher education qualifications and replaced them with three. It thus amended the Education System Act of 1986, which was incompatible with the degree architecture proposed by Bologna. Then, Decree-Law 74/2006 regulated the organisation of qualifications according to the three-cycle structure and imposed the firm deadline of 2009/10 for the adaptation of Portuguese degree programmes. These two pieces of legislation, by establishing a new degree organisation, represented decisive steps towards alignment with the Bologna degree structure and, by extension, towards the promotion of mobility. Another decree-law, 341/2007, stipulated legal arrangements for the recognition of foreign higher education degrees (MCTES 2007a). Additionally,

the overhaul of the Portuguese quality assurance system through Law 38/2007 (MCTES 2007b) and Decree-Law 369/2007 (MCTES 2007c) aimed, among others, to bolster the credibility of Portuguese higher education. Very recently, the Ministry of Education and Science launched the national strategy for the internationalisation of higher education in Portugal (Ministério da Educação e Ciência 2014). Mobility is a priority area, although the main concern in this respect appears to be the attraction of incoming fee-paying students (discussed in Chap. 9).

Before moving on to the evolution of mobility to and from Europe, it is necessary to draw attention to the distinction between degree (or diploma) mobility and credit (or temporary) mobility (Kelo et al. 2006). Degree mobility generally originates from countries with a quantitatively and/or qualitatively insufficient higher education provision. Insufficient or unsatisfactory provision is a push factor for students who leave their country in search of 'perceived academic quality' (Wächter 2014: 89). Thus, degree mobility is also designated as vertical mobility. In contrast, temporary or credit mobility implies that students spend only part of their degree abroad (e.g. Erasmus), driven by expectations of difference and contrast (linguistic, cultural, academic, and so on). Students move to a different institution, assumingly of similar quality. Credit mobility is therefore horizontal, at least in Europe, because of the assumption that 'by and large all universities in the EU are of at least decent quality' (Wächter 2014: 89).

Mobility Overview in Portugal

Scholars have repeatedly signalled the lack of comprehensive and reliable statistical data across Europe to monitor student mobility (Teichler 2011, 2012; Teichler et al. 2011; Papatsiba 2006; Wächter 2014). These deficiencies in data collection have already been acknowledged in official fora, with higher education ministers calling for measures to remedy the situation (EHEA Ministerial Conference 2012). The failure to distinguish between degree and credit mobility in national statistics is one such shortcoming. Then, for credit mobility, a clear definition is lacking. No minimum duration is established to determine when a period of study abroad counts as credit mobility. Furthermore, comprehensive data exist only for Erasmus mobility (Wächter 2014). At the same time, the share of Erasmus as a percentage of all credit mobility is unclear. As a scholar admitted, 'our best guess would be that Erasmus forms 70 to 80% of all

programme-based credit mobility inside the Europe 32 region' (Wächter 2014: 95). For degree mobility, the use of foreign nationality as a proxy for counting degree-mobile students is inappropriate. Foreign nationality can hide students who have been living in the host country before enrolling in higher education. On the contrary, genuine mobility comprises only those students who have changed country to study for a degree.

Data-collection issues also apply to Portugal. National statistics began, first in 2013/14, to distinguish between degree and credit mobility, and to measure genuine mobility based on the country where enrolled students had attended secondary education. The availability of data for only one year prevents us from obtaining a perspective on the evolution of degree mobility. Thus, we will focus exclusively on credit mobility. National data on credit mobility (Erasmus and other) have been available since 2011/12, but only with regard to incoming students. The proportion of Erasmus students among credit-mobile students varies between 70 and 80%. The lack of long-term comprehensive national mobility data and the indication that Erasmus represents a high proportion of credit mobility have led us to choose Erasmus statistics (available from the European Commission since the turn of the century) as the basic reference in discussing the evolution of mobility in Portugal.

Evolution of Credit Mobility in Portugal

Erasmus mobility in Europe has more than doubled since the 1999 Bologna Declaration (European Commission 2014), with considerable variation from country to country. According to the latest Erasmus statistics from the European Commission (2014), the majority of member states are struggling to meet the target of 20% mobile students among graduates, as set down in the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial communiqué (2009). Portugal is no exception. Mobility has been rising, but the increase has been modest when compared against the ambitious targets: the percentage of mobile students is still far from the ambitious target of 20%. In the last academic year with available records from the European Commission 2012/13, the percentage of mobile students lay at 7.4% (Table 8.1).

Ascending mobility rates registered a faster pace in Portugal than the European average since 2000/01. In absolute numbers, Erasmus mobility has grown almost threefold for outgoing students (from 2569 in 2000/01 to 7041 in 2012/13), while graduates registered a 50% increase

Table 8.1 Evolution of Portuguese mobile students in the total of graduates (absolute numbers and percentage)

Year	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13
Graduates	61,140	64,098	68,511	68,668	69,987	71,828	83,276	84,009	75,567	78,609	87,129	94,264	94,867
Mobile (Out)	2569	2825	3172	3782	3845	4312	4424	4753	5394	5388	5964	6484	7041
%	4.2%	4.4%	4.6%	5.5%	5.5%	6.0%	5.3%	5.7%	7.1%	6.9%	6.8%	6.9%	7.4%

Source: DGEEC; European Commission, Education and Training 2014
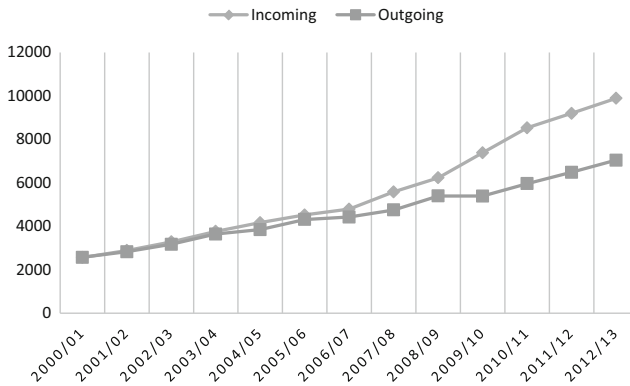
Figure 8.1 Incoming and outgoing Erasmus mobility students in Portugal between 2000/2001 and 2012/2013. *Source*: European Commission, Education and Training 2014

(from 61,140 to 94,867). Over the same time period, incoming students grew fourfold, from 2560 to 9894 (see Fig. 8.1). In part, this unrelenting growth may be a function of low mobility levels at the turn of the millennium. The high prioritisation of staff and student mobility, a key internationalisation activity in Portuguese institutions, by both universities and polytechnics (Amaral et al. 2015; Veiga et al. 2005), may provide an additional explanation.

Incoming and outgoing mobility flows were balanced until 2006. From then on, incoming mobility increased faster than outgoing mobility. The fact that Portugal is becoming an importer country can also be inferred from rankings of top sending and receiving institutions for Erasmus students. In 2013, four Portuguese institutions stood in the top 40 *receiving* institutions; only one stood in the top 40 *sending* institutions (European Commission 2014). Thus, Portugal is no exception to mobility imbalance (Leuven Communiqué 2009; EHEA Ministerial Conference 2012). Its attraction power seems to be explained by the characteristics of the country (climate, coastal location, leisure opportunities, living costs, etc.), confirming the appeal of Mediterranean countries noted by González et al. (2011).

Flourishing mobility conceals some noteworthy phenomena. Spain is the main destination for outgoing students (Fig. 8.2). Poland has risen constantly, and more markedly since 2008/09, reaching second position
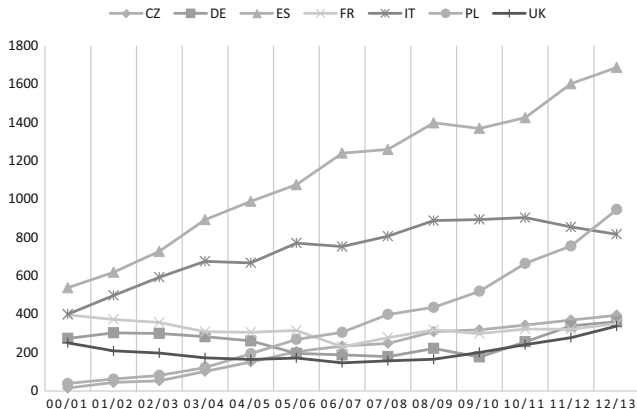
Figure 8.2   Top destination countries for outgoing Portuguese students.
Source: European Commission, Education and Training

among top destinations in 2012/13. The Czech Republic, a minor destination in the past, has emerged in fourth place. Since 2010/11, Italy has been slipping. Portuguese students—already at a disadvantage given Portugal's lower socioeconomic development compared with other Western European countries, further aggravated by the economic crisis since 2009 (Pinto 2012; Pereira and Lains 2012)—chose destinations close to home (Spain) or where cost of living was less burdensome (Poland and the Czech Republic). Arguably, distance and living costs were the factors supporting the rise in outgoing mobility.

For incoming students, similar trends emerge (Fig. 8.3). First, incomers from Spain started rising steeply in 2008/09, followed by relative stabilisation. Second, the numbers of Polish students show constant growth, now forming the second largest incoming group. In third place, Italian students have registered a modest increase only. A constant flow of students from countries such as France and Germany is also noted. One remarkable change is the rising number of Turkish students, now the fifth most numerous group. For incomers, proximity also seems to be a factor, given the large numbers of Spanish students. In addition, compared to other Western European countries, Portugal has a relatively low cost of living and an appealing Mediterranean location and climate as explanatory factors (González et al. 2011).
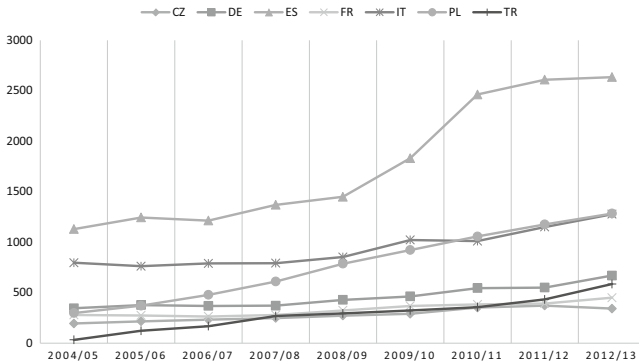
Figure 8.3   Incomers: main countries of origin.
Source: European Commission, Education and Training 2014

Perceptions about the Impact of the Bologna Process in Portugal

In the following, we draw primarily on qualitative data gathered through the 24 focus groups conducted with academics and students in five Portuguese higher education institutions. Survey findings are presented, when relevant, to give added strength to the argument. The focus groups gave us purchase on participants' perceptions of the impact of the Bologna Process, as well as of the promoted recognition instruments, on student mobility. It also allowed for exploring the reasons that drove students to study abroad, as well as the obstacles to mobility.

Administrative Standardisation

Academics expressed mixed opinions about the impact of the Bologna Process on mobility. All agreed that there had been an upsurge in mobility in the latest years. Incoming mobility was, in most cases, perceived as surpassing outgoing mobility: 'more students are coming than going, and more so in recent years; outgoing students are fewer because of the implied costs' (Arts academic, public university). While some clearly attributed the growth to the implementation of the Bologna Process, others believed that other factors were more influential, such as the reduction in the costs of travel, the ease of communication favoured by technological progress, or students' intentions to experience study abroad in anticipation of

future emigration for work. For example, an academic from Computer Engineering in Institution D said:

> I do not believe it's because of Bologna. I think it's the current context because people realize that many times they will have to go abroad because they don't have employment in Portugal. They are, maybe, more alert and end up taking these mobility opportunities such as Erasmus, because it becomes their first encounter with different cultures.

Bologna was, nonetheless, perceived as an initiative that had made mobility easier. First, this facilitating function was the result of convergence of processes and tools to manage mobility across Europe. This eased communication among institutions from different countries. Institutions spoke the same 'language' and used the ECTS as the main currency. This facilitated recognition of subjects taken at the foreign institution.

> The ECTS is universal, there are tables for the grading systems, no problem. (Academic, Arts, Institution A)
>
> I think that nowadays it is easier to go on mobility than before. On the one hand, institutions are more aware of it. On the other, courses have ECTS and the equivalences are easier to establish. Therefore, the bureaucratic obstacles to mobility are now mitigated. In this sense, I believe that Bologna has made it easier, but it's not the only factor. (Academic, Management, Institution C)

The uniform approach to the management of mobility across the institution, as well as the increase in mobile student numbers, justified the creation of institutional units in charge of mobility. The result was streamlined administration and clearly defined processes:

> It's all defined, a fully controlled process. There's the learning agreement, and it states the courses here and there. This is the equivalent for this. (Academic, Computer Engineering, Institution B)

Bologna, through the tools it promoted, was seen as having a significant contribution in this administrative harmonisation. Focus group participants referred to instruments such as the ECTS, the learning agreement, or the grade comparability scale as helpful in managing mobility and granting equivalence. Going back to the legislation passed in 2005, which mandated the use of the recognition and transfer tools proposed under the framework of the Bologna Process, this perception seems grounded.

However, as the purpose of the project was communicated to the selected institutions before the visits, focus groups usually comprised of academics acting as mobility coordinators for their discipline. These were people highly familiar with the mobility procedures. It thus happened that, when the discussion tackled mobility instruments, the other participants sometimes gave the word to the person considered most knowledgeable in this area. Evidence that knowledge about these instruments is not as widespread as the focus groups might suggest comes from the survey results. When asked to rate the relevance of mobility instruments in their institution, high numbers of academics withheld opinion. In some institutions, this applied to as many as 70–80 % of the respondents. The overall percentages of withheld opinions in relation to each instrument are shown in the table below. The means for those academics who rated the relevance of instruments suggest average relevance, highest for the Diploma Supplement (3.54) and lowest for the learning agreement (3.13) (Table 8.2).

These results highlight, at least as mobility is concerned, that the implementation of the Bologna Process has not had extensive reach at the level of lay academics, remaining largely within the remit of designated units/people. One cannot help wondering how far the mobility processes and procedures were set up and are conducted in the absence (voluntary or not) of involvement of academic staff, whom one might expect to have a say about equivalences. This brings technical and administrative staff to the centre of institutional implementation and suggests that the instruments were developed according to an administrative logic, while the academics stood aside from the reform processes (Veiga and Neave 2015). This, in turn, has implications for the thoroughness of curricular and pedagogical reforms, which in many cases have only been achieved in form, not in substance.

Table 8.2 Academics' perceptions of the relevance of mobility instruments in their institutions

	Learning agreement	Academic record transcript	Diploma Supplement	Grade comparability scale
Withheld opinion	52.4%	50.5%	35.6%	42.0%
Mean	3.13	3.27	3.54	3.33
(N)	(305)	(317)	(413)	(372)

Despite the better coordination and the administrative standardisation, a general feeling that the bureaucracy was still heavy persisted among focus group participants. They felt that more needed to be done to simplify the management of mobility. These shortcomings, however, did not invalidate the shared consensus among teaching staff that the formalisation of procedures and mobility instruments across Europe had strengthened recognition and given credibility to the whole process. Students, for their part, complained about the nuisance of the formal administrative procedures, especially because they seemed to take a lot of time to go through:

> It happened to me that I went to the central administration, I needed a paper signed and I said 'I have my flight today to go on Erasmus and you haven't signed it yet and I need it signed before I leave'. It was the agreement, they really needed to sign it. 'No, young lady, only when the meeting is over'. And this makes no sense, it was already September and they had us submit the applications back in February. (Arts student, Institution A)

Degree Convergence and Curricular (In)flexibility

Another way in which Bologna contributed to the growth in mobility was, according to the academics, the convergence of degree structures across Europe, and especially the increased flexibility of the curriculum (although in many cases the curriculum has become rather inflexible). As one participant said:

> How does Bologna promote mobility? It starts by the course structure. The fact that courses last one semester only is incredibly helpful. And one semester across Europe. It helps from the very start. The possibility to give equivalence for subjects which are not exactly the same is also helpful. (Academic, Arts, Institution B)

All was not bright though. Despite the shared tools for recognition of subjects taken abroad and despite the existence of learning agreements, students and academics repeatedly complained that the situation for outgoing students often got complicated when they arrived at the foreign institution. It is not uncommon that subjects included in the learning agreement are not offered, for instance because not enough students have signed up for them. This places students in a difficult situation that

requires changes to the learning agreement. They can even run the risk of not getting equivalence for the chosen subjects.

> The agreement is made, students get there and the subjects they were going to take are not offered. We have to alter the learning agreement with the student there. Then it's up to each of us. I, because I don't like to… It won't be the first student to come out of it at a disadvantage. I mean, he takes English when he should have taken Programming. (Academic, Computer Engineering, Institution B)

The equivalence can also be problematic because the number of ECTS allocated to a subject in the home institution is different from the foreign institution. Another complication comes with timings: subjects scheduled in the home institution in the semester when a student goes on mobility can be offered in a different semester at the foreign institution. A Management academic in Institution A felt that 'it would be much easier if there was standardisation not only with the ECTS but also with the timings'. This latter complaint, in fact, points to the limited flexibility of the degree programme at home combined with unwillingness to accept equivalence with credits from different subjects. We assist an unintended negative consequence of the Bologna Process. The new degree structure it promoted entailed the shortening of the first cycle. This, by itself, has limited the mobility window: in the first year, students get socialised in the institution, thus it is still too early for mobility; in the second year they achieve full integration and could be reluctant to go; and the third year is the final one and students are focused on finishing the degree. To complicate matters, in Portugal the foreshortening of the first degree resulted frequently in a crammed programme because of superficial programme design. The adaptation of the old first degrees was not based on a rethinking of the syllabus, but on a condensation of subject matter which reflected the old four- or five-year programme organisation. This left little room for optional subjects and engendered a perception that all subjects taught were absolutely essential. For mobility, these represent clear obstacles.

> The optional subjects… I understand that this is the Bologna spirit as far as curricular organisation is concerned. But in a three-year degree there is little leeway because there is a set of subject matter that needs to be learnt and mastered, because this is the foundation for the first cycle of higher

education studies. And we cannot… I mean, a Management student cannot choose Accounting instead of Marketing, or Management Control instead of Marketing. Because the three are fundamental for our Management degree. (Academic, Management, Institution D)

Some students confirmed that they felt constrained by the compulsory nature of subjects. This was especially the case of students in the integrated master in Computer Engineering. These students perceived the master degree as the only opportunity to be mobile, because it comprised a semester of optional subjects:

Usually people go abroad in the first semester of the 5th year [the second year of the master degree]. This is because of subject compatibility. They are all optional, so we can choose anything in the host institution. So this is the easiest time for Erasmus'. (Student, Computer Engineering, Institution A)

According to the 2011 Eurostudent report (Orr et al. 2011), 36% of Portuguese students considered that the problems with the recognition of results achieved abroad represented obstacles to mobility. Unfortunately, Portuguese data are not available for the latest report in 2015 to assess the spread of these issues nowadays.

Mobility Obstacles

Indeed, after financial constraints, curricular inflexibility appears to be the second most common obstacle to mobility for Portuguese students (Sin et al. 2015). The rigidity of the curriculum seems to be more acute in the case of hard sciences. The survey responses revealed that students in almost all disciplinary areas believed mobility to be higher in the *licencia-tura* than in the master degree. The exceptions were students in Science, Mathematics and Computer Science, as well as Engineering, Industry and Architecture. These students thought that the master degree had higher mobility than the first degree. Hard sciences are generally characterised by a tight curricular structure in undergraduate education, with strong academic control over the selection and organisation of knowledge. Lattuca and Stark (1994) referred to this as 'curricular coherence'. It implies that students learn by building blocks of the discipline one upon another until reaching the prescribed level of understanding. In contrast, softer fields display curricular diversity. These disciplinary specificities are

likely to explain the inflexibility of undergraduate programmes in Science, Computer Science or Engineering. In these areas, students' perceptions that mobility is higher during the master degree could be due to the fact that this is a level at which students choose a specialisation and have greater control over the direction of studies (e.g. for Physics, for example, see Kehm and Alesi 2010; Sin 2012).

The fear that mobility periods will jeopardise timely completion of the degree is, most certainly, derived from this perceived inflexibility. The Eurostudent report (Orr et al. 2011) confirms that this concern is widespread among the Portuguese students. According to the publication, around 40 % of students saw periods spent abroad as threats to their study progress. Only two countries—Germany and Austria—had more students who expected that mobility would delay their studies (Orr et al. 2011).

Money represents the first and foremost obstacle to mobility in Portugal (Sin et al. 2015; Orr et al. 2011). According to Eurostudent, 64 % of Portuguese students who had not studied abroad saw the expected financial burden as an obstacle to mobility (Orr et al. 2011). The report also revealed that in Portugal the family was the primary source of funding for mobility, identified as such by 62 % of students (similar only in Italy and Switzerland). This emerged in stark contrast to over 50 % of countries where public support fulfilled this function. Portugal and Switzerland were the only countries where the share of students considering public support as the primary source lied below 20 % (Orr et al. 2011). Unsurprisingly, students' social background appeared to determine the extent to which money was perceived as an obstacle. In fact, in the focus groups, polytechnic students—generally of lower socioeconomic origin (Tavares et al. 2008)—emphasised the money factor more compared to university students. Focus group discussions also revealed that students in private institutions more acutely felt the financial constraints than those in public institutions. Their families already make an effort to pay the higher tuition fees practised in the private sector, having hardly any money surplus for mobility. On the reasons for the low outgoing mobility in their institution, one Management student in Institution C explained:

> This is a private university and the years we spend here cost a lot of money for parents. Then there is no money to go on mobility. Maybe if we were in a public institution with lower tuition fees, maybe we could put some money aside to then do the master's elsewhere or to go on Erasmus. It's

really because of the money. I think that nowadays the country encourages us to be mobile, but it does not support us financially.

The financial hardships confronting Portuguese students must be understood against the negative structural conditions of the country. Its socio-economic development has been lagging behind the European average, a situation weakened further by the economic crisis since 2009 (Pinto 2012; Pereira and Lains 2012). Thus, families' disposable income has dwindled and the purchasing power of the Portuguese in most European countries has become even lower. Unfortunately, combined with the insignificant public support in Portugal (Orr et al. 2011), these are factors unlikely to improve students' ability to be mobile.

Mobility Drivers

An analysis of mobility drivers revealed that employability was the main motivation for students to become mobile (Sin et al. 2015). Yet this was not understood in the sense already identified in the literature, namely that students who have been mobile get a better appreciation by employers, thus becoming more employable. The surveyed Portuguese students saw mobility as a means of developing employability beyond national borders. Mobility was perceived as an opportunity to experience living abroad in the eventuality of being pushed to look for work abroad after finishing their degree. The mobility period was thus described as an antechamber—as a trial period—preceding eventual employment abroad.

My idea, if I were to go, would be to go to England, see what the labour market is like and, maybe, possibly, if I became used to living there, maybe my idea would be to stay there... Because I know the conditions are better, there are more jobs and they hire people. Maybe for the first few years it would be a good experience to start working out there. Then, when I came back to Portugal, employers would look at me in a different way. (Student, Computer Engineering, Institution C)

This perception is, once again, tightly intertwined with Portugal's current economic depression. The country had already been on a downward curve since the turn of the century, but the economic crisis of 2009 aggravated unemployment and precariousness of contractual conditions (Pereira and Lains 2012). This has severely affected the young generations (Andrade

and Duarte 2011), and higher education graduates have been no exception. According to the DGEEC, in 2013, 59.9 % of unemployed graduates were under 35. So, although Portugal has traditionally been a labour-exporting country (Pinto 2012), recent emigration has stood out in one key aspect: those emigrating nowadays are young and highly skilled.

Mobility drivers are not related uniquely to working abroad. They are also related to personal growth and a confrontation of one's own views and attitudes with a different culture, in the spirit on which the Erasmus programme was founded (Nørgaard 2014). But aspirations are not only to experience difference and contrast, as was assumed to be the case for credit, or horizontal, mobility (Wächter 2014). Some students also aspire to experience what it is like to study in what they perceive to be prestigious institutions in the richer European countries (Sin et al. 2015). These aspirations align better with what Wächter (2014) described as vertical mobility, usually characteristic of degree mobility. Thus, for some Portuguese students, credit mobility is once again invested with a different interpretation than what the literature has so far argued.

CONCLUSIONS

In tune with the European vision of a common space for the free movement of European citizens, student mobility in higher education has been a priority in European policy. The launch of the Bologna Process and the commitment of higher education ministers to a series of agreed priorities gave it increased visibility. In Portugal, it was the Bologna Process that triggered national attention to mobility and unchained initiatives aimed at its promotion. This chapter has analysed aspects related to the implementation of the mobility objective at national and institutional level. As far as concrete numbers are concerned, only credit mobility within the Erasmus programme was analysed because of limited data availability. The chapter has also looked at the perceived impact of the Bologna Process on mobility, its positive effects and negative unintended consequences, and the factors that influence it, as either obstacles or drivers. The findings need to be understood against the difficult conditions Portugal is facing nowadays. Already at a disadvantage compared to all other Western European countries in terms of socioeconomic development, the country has suffered an additional blow with the onset of the economic crisis in 2009 (Pinto 2012; Pereira and Lains 2012).

Considering the national level, Portugal only started passing legislation to align its higher education system to the Bologna Process in 2005. It introduced the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, as well as mobility documents, such as the learning agreement or the academic transcript record. Compared to the European average, mobility in Portugal has grown at a faster rate since the launch of the Bologna Process, probably explained by its priority status on institutional agendas (Amaral et al. 2015; Veiga et al. 2005). Notwithstanding this, the latest figures available showed mobility to lie at 7.4% of graduates. This is still far from the 2020 target of 20% mobile students among graduates, ambitiously set by the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué in 2009. Another downside of the developments is the unbalanced mobility. Incoming mobility has superseded outgoing mobility from around 2007/8 onwards. The latter has risen as well, at a slower rate. Financial constraints and curricular inflexibility appear to be the main barriers to the mobility of Portuguese students. Regarding financial constraints, the absence of public support and the burden on the family pocket are conspicuous. These factors are compounded by the lower incomes of Portuguese families and their reduced purchasing power in Western European countries. These factors explain why the destination choices of mobile students were made primarily on proximity (Spain) and cost criteria (Eastern Europe). Additionally, high unemployment and a weak and uncertain home labour market in Portugal also explain why employability is the main motivation for students to go on mobility. Portuguese students bring a new perspective to mobility as an antechamber to potential employment abroad (Sin et al. 2015).

A welcome consequence of the Bologna Process has been the standardisation of administrative procedures and mobility instruments across Europe. Without doubt, this has facilitated student mobility. Yet, administration continues burdensome and in need of further simplification, despite guaranteeing credibility which ultimately benefits recognition. Bologna does not take full credit for higher mobility: in addition to it, there are other factors, including cheaper travel, ease of communication and access to information facilitated by technological advances. A second beneficial consequence of Bologna for mobility has been the convergence of the degree structure among European countries. But the best intentions in the policy context of the Bologna Process to make courses more flexible and comparable (through modularisation, ECTS or learning outcomes) had unintended negative effects at institutional level. Institutional practices still create barriers because of the manner in which study programmes

were adapted to the Bologna degree structure. Countering expectations of increased flexibility, the foreshortening of the first degree translated into a compression of subject matter and reduced flexibility. Thus, stricter curricular requirements have been an unexpected negative consequence at institutional level, manifest in restrictions on the timing of mobility, the predominance of compulsory subjects, or the requirement that some can only be passed at the home institution. No doubt, these constraints impact mobility negatively, generating fears among Portuguese students that mobility will prejudice the timely completion of their degree.

To conclude, the status of mobility in Portugal is a disappointing picture when compared with the political intentions of the Bologna Process. National commitment to mobility, manifest in legislative action and the recent internationalisation strategy (Ministério da Educação e Ciência 2014), is not sufficient to ensure the realisation of policy objectives at institutional level. Institutional practices, derived from the very implementation of the Bologna Process, come well to the fore as barriers to mobility. So do economic difficulties in a context of insignificant public support for mobility and a situation in which its costs have to be supported by students themselves or their families, made heavier by the economic crisis that has severely affected Portugal since 2009. Thus, mobility in Portugal is far from fulfilling the policy goals envisaged by the Bologna Process and the European Commission. The 2020 mobility target of 20 % mobile graduates appears especially out of reach, as a remote ideal.

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Attractiveness and Internationalisation

INTRODUCTION

One of the objectives of the Bologna Process was to boost the drawing power and attractiveness of the EHEA, an objective closely linked to policies for the internationalisation of higher education. Until recently, Portugal did not have a consistent policy for internationalising higher education. In the early days of the Bologna Process, studies attributed the low priority of internationalisation to the government's lack of a clear strategy in this area and to governmental instability (Rosa et al. 2004; Veiga et al. 2005, 2006). As a result, internationalisation strategies in Portuguese public higher education institutions were marginal, and more reactive than proactive (Veiga et al. 2006).

However, the decline in the number of national candidates to higher education and a situation of economic crisis has recently changed this panorama. This chapter focuses on the changes in the attitude of both the Portuguese government and the institutions of higher education towards internationalisation, as well as the shift in the driving rationale (Knight and de Wit 1995) accompanying them.

INTERNATIONALISATION RATIONALES AND THE SHIFT OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS' BOUNDARIES

Knight and de Wit (1995) distinguish four rationales that underlie national policies of internationalisation of higher education: the political, cultural, academic and economic rationales. The political rationale is driven by

perceptions about the role of the country in the world; the cultural rationale is influenced by the use of a common language and is, in general, observable in countries that were former colonial powers; the academic rationale is associated with academic improvement and the emulation of international standards for education and research; and the economic rationale, which is becoming prominent, is associated with the search by higher education institutions for additional revenues to compensate for declining public funding (Amaral and Rosa 2008).

At the turn of the century, internationalisation rationales of public Portuguese institutions were mainly cultural and academic (Veiga et al. 2006). The main approaches to internationalisation were student and staff mobility in the context of European mobility programmes and the enrolment of students from the Portuguese-speaking countries.

The internationalisation of Portuguese higher education institutions was fraught with serious difficulties, because of the government's apparent lack of interest in its promotion and its opposition to cross-border operations. In the European context, the inefficiency of the government in passing the legislation necessary for the implementation of the Bologna Process delayed the alignment of the degree structure with Bologna. And the lack of legislation allowing public institutions to charge higher tuition fees from non-European students did not create an incentive for their recruitment. Besides, the government discouraged internationalisation of higher education activities abroad, despite its market rhetoric (Veiga et al. 2006). Not only did it prohibit franchising education activities and the recognition of foreign degrees conferred under franchising activities, it also chose to prohibit education activities abroad leading to the award of a recognised Portuguese degree. As a result, the Portuguese institutions operating in the Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOPs) could only award degrees under the local national law, not Portuguese degrees.

The involvement of Portuguese higher education institutions in cross-border higher education—an undertaking that determines a shift in their organisational boundaries (Santos and Eisenhardt 2005)—can be understood through the identity concept (Amaral et al. 2015). Following Santos and Eisenhardt (2005), the setting of organisational boundaries ensures coherence between the identity of the organisation and its activities, namely in relation to the external environment and, especially, ambiguous environments (e.g. emergent markets) (Santos and Eisenhardt 2005). Among the PALOPs there are cases of a political context of weak regulation allowing for some ambiguity, which increases the relevance of the

identity conception when defining those activities that are in harmony with the institutional identity. Public universities, with strong tradition and identity, have refrained from creating campuses abroad or from franchising activities, as granting good quality standards might have been a difficult affair. On the contrary, private universities have an economically driven identity, which is compatible with operating under different national legislations with substantial ambiguity as regards the enforcement of quality standards. Therefore, private institutions have created a number of institutions abroad in the PALOPs. At last, public polytechnics, established after the 1974 revolution, seem more open than public universities to embarking on cross-border operations and contemplate this kind of expansion, suggesting an identity more flexible than in the case of universities, an identity still in the process of definition (Amaral et al. 2015).

Therefore, until quite recently, the economic rationale hardly underpinned the internationalisation approaches of Portuguese public HEIs (Rosa et al. 2004). However, since 2011, the economic rationale has become increasingly important for both public and private institutions. Due to the economic crisis (Teixeira 2012), state funding decreased in the public sector, while the private sector was faced with an increasing number of students who could not pay their tuition fees. At the same time, there has been a declining trend in the number of students applying to higher education due to consistently low birth rates (Fonseca 2012). This created a new interest in the recruitment of foreign students by both public and private institutions, and the government came under increasing pressure to create more attractive conditions for the internationalisation of educational activities.

In 2014, the government finally passed legislation allowing public institutions to increase fees for non-Portuguese students, thereby signalling a turn to the importance attributed to the economic rationale. Under the new legal framework, the statute of the international student links functional imperatives of attractiveness and regulation mechanisms with regard to international students. The decree-law (Decree-law number 36/2014 of 10 March) states in its preamble that Portuguese higher education institutions have been attracting growing numbers of non-EU foreign students and that this has increased both their capacity and the rationalisation of their resources with positive impact on the Portuguese economy. Charging for higher tuition and attracting more foreign students, as they also count in the funding formula for public HEIs, have become strategies for the institutions to supplement their revenues.

In the aftermath of the passing of the statute of the international student, the government (the Deputy Minister of Regional Development and the Minister of Education and Science) appointed a working group to elaborate the national strategy for the internationalisation of higher education. The working group's report proposed a strategy based on institutional collaboration through the development of joint curricula and promoting cooperation between researchers, as well as through projects that would increase the international mobility of students, academic staff and researchers (Grupo de Trabalho 2014). Another target of the proposed strategy was to increase the supply of distance learning programmes, including Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). These proposals are to be implemented in articulation with the adoption of administrative measures, including the establishment of a 'Green Channel' for prospective candidates, entailing close cooperation among the official departments involved in the process (visas, residence permits, tax identification number, accommodation, language courses, and so on).

The report acknowledged that the Portuguese language is a major asset of the country's higher education system and, consequently, should be incorporated in its internationalisation strategy. It is expected that the Portuguese language will be a major factor in attraction of both students from Portuguese-speaking countries interested in furthering their academic competencies and students from other geographical areas who want to develop their proficiency in a language that is fast expanding and is currently spoken by 250 million people worldwide (Grupo de Trabalho 2014). The report also considered that the integration of any country in the global economy depends heavily on proficiency in foreign languages. Therefore, the report included recommendations for significantly improving the multilingual skills of Portuguese higher education students. Finally, the report sustained the need to coordinate the various actions and provide the stimuli addressing specific needs of individual higher education institutions to make sure that all the initiatives were coherently developed.

In what follows, we will explore how the objective of attractiveness has been fulfilled in the Portuguese higher education system. The argument is that this objective has been subsumed to the internationalisation strategies of Portuguese higher education institutions, which is why we will often refer to internationalisation, rather than attractiveness, throughout the chapter. Internationalisation assumes a twofold feature: it serves the major policy goal of making Portuguese higher education attractive for

non-Portuguese students and academics, with incoming mobility at its core; and it provides institutions a legitimation basis to deal with financial stringency and to ensure their sustainability. While the former was translated into the legal framework referred to above, the latter was promoted by a set of activities led by higher education institutions envisaging the institutionalisation of international activities (e.g. international networks, international agreements, cross-border delivery, and so on). On the basis of the data collected, we will argue that the attractiveness of higher education as a policy goal was subordinated in institutional strategies to pragmatic concerns and objectives consistent with the increasing relevance of the economic rationale. The number of international students will be presented to shed light on the degree of attractiveness of Portuguese higher education. We will then move to the institutional level to analyse the extent to which the attractiveness agenda is articulated among academics and students.

Attractiveness as a European Political Objective

The attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education systems were acknowledged within the Bologna Process (Bologna Declaration 1999; Prague Communiqué 2001) and reinforced the idea of competition among higher education institutions for incoming (and in many cases paying) students. The idea of competitiveness of the EHEA was one of the drivers triggering the enlargement of the Erasmus programme to non-European students (Erasmus Mundus programme). In this sense, Bologna promoted a shift in the interpretation of mobility by combining the idea of enhancement of attractiveness with the economic rationale of competition between higher education systems and their institutions. This shift increased the awareness about the need to be both competitive and attractive to non-European institutions, students and academics. According to Blitz, 'from 1991, it was clear that the Community had recognised education as an agent of political change, and something that could be exploited to enhance the Community's external relations' (Blitz 2003: 207). There were attempts by European ministers of education 'to define European cooperation as a cultural project', emphasising that 'the need to increase global economic competitiveness must be balanced with the objective of improving the social characteristics of the EHEA' (Olsen and Maassen 2007: 8). However, economic arguments forged at European level impinged on the Bologna Process. Following Keeling:

> This is commonly expressed as "attractiveness"; an issue which manifests itself in the Commission's heightened concern with international student numbers and university league tables. This concern with international pre-eminence in higher education is even more striking in its statements on research policy, particularly in relation to science and technology. (Keeling 2006: 211)

From the European Commission's perspective, the Lisbon strategy aimed to make the European Union education and training systems a world-quality reference by 2010, in order to acquire a world-wide degree of attraction (i.e. the most favoured destination for foreign students and scholars). In this sense, the idea of attractiveness of the EHEA aligns with the increased influence of rankings in higher education institutions, and it is probably what prompted the Council and the Commission to finance the development of a European ranking system (U-Multirank), which was launched on 13 May 2014 (van Vught and Ziegele 2012).

Europeanisation, internationalisation and globalisation of higher education drive changes that challenge higher education institutions' core values and ethos (Huisman and Van der Wende 2004). These challenges are visible in tensions such as: education as a public good *versus* the need to increase the institutions' private funding; teaching in the national language to protect cultural and linguistic diversity *versus* teaching in a foreign language to promote internationalisation and attract students; and an internationalisation process developed by EU programmes based upon a cooperative approach *versus* competition on a global scale. In this vein, the emphasis on stronger competition among higher education providers, together with the reinforcement of drivers towards internationalisation and the importance of achieving a sufficient share of international students, are progressively indicative of neoliberal discourses based on outputs measurement (Seixas 2013)

ATTRACTIVENESS IN THE PORTUGUESE CONTEXT

In the Portuguese context, national policies only recently started to pay attention to internationalisation (as seen in new legislation defining the statute of the international student in 2014). The Bologna implementation process, too, was a lengthy affair (Chap. 6), making it difficult for many institutions to adapt their study programmes to the Bologna structure. However, public higher education institutions have been developing

internationalisation activities within the limits of their autonomy, assuming, by themselves, a role as key actors driving forward internationalisation. Therefore, in the initial phase of the Bologna Process, internationalisation was often assumed as a set of activities rather than a strategy, and it largely depended on the institutions' ethos, history and degree of autonomy (Veiga et al. 2005).

Previous research on the internationalisation of the Portuguese higher education system and its institutions identified the main factors fostering and impeding internationalisation (Rosa et al. 2004; Veiga et al. 2005). The factors facilitating internationalisation were

- promotion of international research cooperation;
- commitment of participants (academic and non-academic staff as well as the students);
- implementation of organisational structures providing administrative and technical support and
- the establishment of new governance structures.

The factors impeding internationalisation were

- internationalisation was not seen as a development key-factor by the organisations themselves;
- lack of central coordination of research activities as its decentralisation hinders the possibility to further internationalise research as an organisational component;
- lack of incentives in the academic career;
- sustaining student mobility demands a coherent strategy and an attractive offer to foreign students (e.g. availability of housing for mobility and foreign students or English as teaching language);
- lack of command of English among both academic staff and students.

The studies concluded that, despite all the difficulties at the institutional level and the underdeveloped internationalisation policies, there was a trend towards the increase in the number of mobility students, of international programmes and of research partnerships.

Davies (1995) used a two-dimensional diagram to represent the position of higher education institutions relative to the nature and importance of their internationalisation process. One axis represents the importance of internationalisation (from high or central to low or marginal) and the

other axis represents the type of organisation of the internationalisation process (from systematic to *ad hoc*). The data collected from a sample of six Portuguese higher education institutions, chosen to ensure diversity of geographical location, legal status (public or private) and subsystem (university or polytechnic) (Veiga et al. 2006), shows that, at the time, none of the internationalisation processes of these institutions could be classified as high or central. And of the six higher education institutions in the sample, four presented marginal and *ad hoc* internationalisation processes, while the other two (both public universities) presented processes that could be classified as marginal but systematic. The systematic nature of the internationalisation of the later institutions was just the result of the appointment of people in the top central management to coordinate and facilitate internationalisation activities. The implementation of managerial structures (special committees and/or task-forces lead by vice-rectors or vice-presidents for international relations) to better coordinate the European and international activities of the institution reflects the awareness about the need to respond to changes in the environment. These managerial structures created to deal with internationalisation were later developed further in the context of the managerial turn that Portuguese higher education institutions went through after 2007, under the influence of NPM (Magalhães et al. 2013; Veiga et al. 2014).

At the national level, the government's internationalisation initiatives were limited to supporting, with grants, the training of graduate and post-graduate students coming from the PALOPs and providing vacancies in higher education for special kinds of students (e.g. descendants of Portuguese emigrants). This lack of attention to internationalisation was visible in the absence, until 2013/14, of national statistics differentiating between degree and credit mobility and measuring genuine mobility (see Chap. 8). The incoming flow of international students in 2013/14 shows that their number is rather small, representing only 4% of total enrolments, and that their countries of origin are mainly Brazil, Angola and Cape Verde. However, though in a lesser extent, the flux of European students is also visible in the case of Spain, Italy and France.

Previous research underlined that 'in the Portuguese case, predominant rationales are basically the political, cultural and more recently the economic rationale' (Rosa et al. 2004: 140). However, the internationalisation of Portuguese higher education institutions was conditioned by the nature of the countries involved in international exchange activities, as there are what might be called the countries of the 'Lusophone' space,

integrated by the PALOPs, Brazil, East Timor and Macau, from where 70 % of all international students originate.

This cooperation with countries where Portuguese is the official language is highly significant for the process of internationalisation and the attractiveness of Portuguese higher education. In actual fact, Portugal is the first choice of most students coming from the former African colonies when they consider studying abroad (Rosa et al. 2004). Also, in the case of Brazil, many students have used their national scholarships to enrol in post-graduate studies in Portuguese universities, which created a negative reaction from the Brazilian government, dissatisfied with what was considered an excessive preference for a country, with the additional disadvantage that it did not force students to become fluent in a language different from Portuguese.

In public higher education institutions, the relationship with the Lusophone countries combined the political and cultural rationales, but the academic rationale was in general absent, except in the case of Brazil. The political idea of a 'Lusophone space' builds on the assumption and goal of maintaining privileged relations with these countries and allowing Portugal to play a key role in bridging the European Union and the Portuguese speaking countries. Portuguese higher education institutions refer to this rationale in their institutional documents, such as the statutes or strategic plans. The cultural rationale is rooted in the Portuguese language as one of the most-spoken all over the world and in the perceived need for Portugal to play a role in the cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries (Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, S. Tomé and Príncipe, and East Timor) (Rosa et al. 2004).

After some initial difficulties in the relations between Portugal and its former colonies, in the aftermath of their independence in the 1970s, relations have progressively improved and Portugal and Portuguese higher education institutions have significantly increased their cooperation with these countries (Eurydice 2000). The Portuguese state has subsidised special places for students from these countries, negotiating a quota with each public university. However, these students were included in the funding formula at the same price as national students, which did not create an economic incentive for institutions to attract them as an alternative to Portuguese students. Therefore, the economic rationale, based on the profit argument, was, until recently, not valid for public HEIs.

The situation was different for private institutions, as they were free to set the value of tuition fees and as the presence of additional students

contributed directly to the budget of the institution. At the time, private institutions were starting to face increasing difficulties in recruiting national students, which made the economic rationale important for them (Fonseca 2012).

In contrast, in Europe, Portuguese is not a widely-taught and widespread language, causing major hindrance in attracting students (Rosa et al. 2004; Veiga et al. 2005). Nonetheless, in a lesser extent, the flux of European students is visible in the case of Spain, Italy and France (see Table 9.1). In the European context, the institutions' approaches to internationalisation mainly followed the political and cultural rationales. The former was present as staff and student exchanges sought closer alignment between Portugal and Europe. The cultural rationale was related to some immaterial values such as European citizenship and developing a 'common social and cultural space' (Bologna Declaration 1999). The academic rationale related to educational improvement was also obvious in institutions' attempts to align study programmes to the Bologna model. Yet, the state's inefficiency in passing legislation (see Chap. 6) to allow such alignment led to mixed success. Only public universities—as the only higher education institutions to enjoy full autonomy—could implement the changes (Veiga et al. 2005) until the necessary legislation was passed in 2006.

Also related to the academic rationale, enhancing the research capacity by means of partnerships with other European universities was a major driving force of the process for public institutions (Veiga et al. 2006). In the case of private institutions, the research activity was, in general, weak, although they had been gradually using the relationships established through student mobility to initiate some research cooperation (Veiga et al. 2006). However, their internationalisation activities were mainly based on student mobility financed by European programmes, aiming at promoting their international image as an additional factor to attract more national candidates. This could be related to the economic rationale.

In 2014, the statute of the international student was passed, with the expectation that it would widen access and encourage enrolments of international students in higher education institutions, mainly in the public sector. This action aimed at facilitating foreign enrolments in Portuguese higher education through a specific regime of access, and enabled public higher education institutions to charge tuition fees above the threshold fixed by law for Portuguese students on the basis of the calculation of the actual cost of training. Additionally, this action represented a shift towards

Table 9.1 Enrolments in higher education degree programmes, in 2013/14

Country of origin	Number	%
TOTAL	14,883	100.0
Brazil	5218	35.1
Angola	2121	14.3
Cape Verde	1832	12.3
Spain	647	4.3
Mozambique	483	3.2
São Tomé e Príncipe	317	2.1
Italy	315	2.1
France	279	1.9
East Timor	257	1.7
Iran	232	1.6
Germany	205	1.4
Guinea-Bissau	199	1.3
United States	175	1.2
Ukraine	162	1.1
China	148	1.0
Belgium	129	0.9
Venezuela	129	0.9
Macau	122	0.8
The Netherlands	110	0.7
Poland	101	0.7
Others	1702	11.4

Source: DGEEC/MEC—RAIDES 13

an economic rationale of internationalisation of the Portuguese higher education system, influencing the institutions' strategies with regard to the issue.

This shift has promoted competition-driven approaches among Portuguese higher education institutions, aiming at increasing revenues from fee-paying foreign students, which is even more relevant for the private sector. Adding weight to the competitiveness approach, the drastic decrease in the number of national students enrolled in private institutions has made the attraction of foreign students an even more important survival strategy. In line with this, the private sector has expanded its provision of higher education in the Portuguese-speaking countries by operating locally under the legal framework of the receiving countries, where they award non-Portuguese degrees and diplomas (Amaral et al. 2015).

In sum, higher education institutions have led the way in the process of making the attractiveness of higher education a policy goal. Only in 2014 did the government take some action to deal with pragmatic concerns, such as the decrease of the number of candidates to higher education, and to define objectives associated with economic rationales referred to above. The need to coordinate institutional policies and activities with national policies was highlighted by the working group in charge of designing the proposals for the internationalisation of the Portuguese higher education system.

ENGAGEMENT WITH ATTRACTIVENESS: ACADEMICS AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

The analysis of how the attractiveness agenda is articulated among academics and students shows that the development of attractiveness has been pursued through the expansion of institutional strategies focusing on already-existing internationalisation processes. Actually, the increased attractiveness objective of Portuguese higher education institutions is reshaping their internationalisation strategy, which is evident in the increasing flux of students.

> The [institution] has increased the number of participants in mobility programmes beginning to emerge in Europe, more individualized projects, oriented to a set of specific countries (…) [The institution] has been working lately to attract candidates who apply to undertake part of their study programme or the whole degree programme here at the (institution) from Asia, Africa …. (Academic, Engineering, Institution A)

The interviewed students only relate the institutional attractiveness agenda to a perceived increase in the number of foreign students enrolled at their institution. However, the academics show differentiated perceptions about the attractiveness of European higher education institutions, as a political objective of the Bologna Process, and about the added value of the Bologna degree structure to promote this objective. While in the field of Engineering the Bologna degree structure is seen as a drawback responsible for the decrease of interest in second-cycle degree programmes 'just to make the *mestrado*, here, lost some attractiveness' (Academic, Engineering, Institution A), in the field of Arts, the Bologna degree structure is seen as an advantage, as shorter degree programmes are more attractive to students: 'there is a major attraction of Brazilian students, and

I think it also has to do with the fact that degree programmes are shorter' (Academic, Arts, Institution B).

In general, the strategies for increasing attractiveness are based on the institutionalisation of already-existing mobility activities. The exchange of students and professors is clearly inducing strategies to increase the number of foreign students; for instance, an academic stated that 'the reception of students is very systematised in [institution A] in general (…) so there are a lot of activities that are already very streamlined, the set up to receive students is already very established' (Academic, Engineering, Institution A). Simultaneously, already-established contacts and networks support and activate the flux of students originating from non-European countries, namely from Brazil and Angola: '[institution B] has, clearly, two or three axes of activity: one is Brazil (…) another is Africa where our relationships, particularly with Mozambique and Angola, have intensified too' (Academic, Arts, Institution B).

For the academic staff, internationalisation and attractiveness are also associated with the need to raise additional funds, which can be used for subsidising an internationalisation strategy focusing on cooperation in research. An interviewed academic stated that the need to raise additional funds is an issue to be taken into account when analysing what drives attractiveness (Academic, Management, Institution B). The same academic also considered that the inclusion of new publics, so far underrepresented in higher education, could be an additional incentive.

One might argue that the recently increasing popularity of the internationalisation process has been driven by the economic rationale, visible in the arguments used to substantiate the need to increase attractiveness, which might be explained by the resource dependence theory. Indeed, the survival of higher education institutions depends on the availability of adequate resources, such as enrolled students and financing. On the one hand, the renewed interest in internationalisation has arguably been triggered by the decrease in internal demand in recent years, as it represents an opportunity to counteract the loss of Portuguese students in higher education driven by persistent low birth rates (Magalhães et al. 2009). On the other hand, the economic and financial crisis seems to be playing a crucial role in moving institutional strategies focusing on international activities forward, as higher education institutions have to increase their revenues with alternative funding sources.

However, the interviewees showed mixed feelings about the possibility of obtaining large financial gains coming from charging higher tuition fees

to foreign students. On the one hand, some interviewees assumed that it was possible to optimise the supply of programmes and places for new students based on the increase of tuition fees. On the other hand, other interviewees were not sure about the value-for-money of Portuguese diplomas, and how much tuition fees could be increased and still attract foreign students. In the words of an interviewed academic, 'what happens is that tuition fees at the [institution A] have been the highest in the country and (…) it is a matter of relationship between what is offered in return for what you pay' (Academic, Arts, Institution A). Indeed, if the statute of the international student, passed in 2014, has created an opportunity to charge higher tuition fees to foreign students, it also creates a competitive disadvantage in comparison with countries where fees are low or do not exist. In the words of one interviewed academic staff, 'studying here is more expensive (…) for a European, it is better to go to France or to Scotland than to come to Portugal, because Portugal is more expensive and in those countries higher education is free' (Academic, Engineering, Institution B).

Therefore, the perceptions of a number of the interviewed academics reflect some scepticism about the attractiveness of Portuguese higher education institutions. The idea that Portugal cannot attract the best students, because they do not see Portuguese universities capable of hiring the best professors, should lead to an alternative approach. This should focus on the dissemination of knowledge to Portuguese-speaking countries, namely to Angola, East Timor, etc., where the use of the Portuguese language is a competitive advantage, rather than play the game of competing with the most prestigious institutions in the world, eventually using English as the teaching language.

> … we want to have the best students and we cannot have them because we do not have the best professors. Indeed, we would have to hire the top academics (…). The other approach that I think (…), has more value, is that Europe can be a centre for dissemination of knowledge to developing countries. I think, for example, in Asian countries and African countries, where we have a better capacity to transfer knowledge than the African universities (…) and therefore I do not refuse the role of education in Portugal, namely of [Institution A], in Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOPs): students from PALOPs should come (…). (Academic, Management, Institution A)

Other alternative paths of strategic action develop around joint-programmes and projects promoted at the European level under the framework of the Erasmus Mundus programme. These activities, visible

in the institutions' attractiveness agenda, are being developed using the already-established internationalisation strategies of Portuguese higher education institutions, but they may raise problems if modules are not taught in English. As stated by one of the interviewed academics,

> … the mobility of teachers, in conferences and training periods, allows to pass information and the students who come and who also pass information induce a lot of direct promotion by word of mouth, which has promoted institution B quite a lot. For example, there is a degree programme already with an international semester with a Bulgarian university, which is innovative (…) which is also an added-value, and it resulted precisely from a contact with Erasmus colleagues who came, saw the course, liked the course, and as we have the skills, we have the structures proposed: let's do it. (Academic, Management, Institution B)

Other activities and initiatives are being experimented with, promoted by the advantages of booming information technologies. Blended and online education programmes, MOOCS and e-books are examples fitting the attractiveness agenda at the institutional level and inducing competitiveness of higher education institutions. Indeed,

> … a strategy to become the most competitive university; if we imagine, great universities in the world start to have initiatives of this kind and to offer online degree programmes granting a diploma to the students who basically do all their programme at distance; and this certainly is a phenomenon that is growing more and is, without a doubt, the way of positioning of the (institution) to become competitive this year (…). (Academic, Engineering, Institution A)

However, the priorities of the internationalisation strategies are to be found on the either/or relationship between the use of English or Portuguese. The trade-off is recognised simultaneously as an advantage when the target is the cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries and as a drawback when the aim is to establish relationships with non-Portuguese speaking countries.

> … one of the issues under discussion is the language, whether to speak only in English or to speak only in Portuguese, and there are good arguments in favour of both; if the market is the PALOPs (…) the advantage is ours, if we want to attract people from large universities, from the richest countries, English has to be the language. (Academic, Engineering, Institution A)

In the case of private institutions where research activities are still quite incipient, there is a strong option for promoting activities in Portuguese-speaking countries, through the creation of higher education institutions operating in compliance with the local national legislation. In the case of public universities, there are several cases of success with European students and also some capacity to attract non-European students, a good example being the relations with Brazil. However, public universities tend to attract students to come to Portugal instead of creating a campus abroad. Actually there is not a single example of a public institution operating abroad under the local legislation, as this change in boundaries would run counter to the identity of public institutions.

One may conclude that the views of students and the academic staff on the fulfilment of the attractiveness goal of Portuguese higher education institutions are quite diverse. The attractiveness agenda is understood only in terms of the growing number of foreign students in the perceptions of the interviewed students. In turn, the interviewed academics assume attractiveness as a goal to cope with financial and economic concerns of the institutions. In line with the argument developed in this chapter, this pragmatic attitude is contributing to mitigating the cultural and historical character of institutional international approaches.

Conclusions

In Portugal, the political objective of increasing the attractiveness of higher education systems has largely been subsumed to the internationalisation strategies of higher education institutions. Additionally, the pursuit of making higher education institutions more attractive appears closely linked to the context of financial stringency aggravated by the economic crisis. This aspect raises an important issue related to the fact that economic, financial and social conditions in the Bologna countries, Portugal included, have changed since its inception, making the analysis of the extent to which attractiveness as a political objective is, or not, a corollary of Bologna reforms rather complex.

In Portugal, the attractiveness agenda is also marked by the decrease of demand by Portuguese students due to demographic factors. Therefore, decreasing enrolments and decreasing public funding due to the economic crisis make the need to ensure sustainability of higher education degree programmes more pressing. Hence, the profit argument, which initially

weighed little in public sector higher education, is gaining increasing relevance in the perception of the surveyed academics.

The strategy of higher education institutions has to consider two conflicting approaches. On the one hand, the natural candidates to enrol in Portuguese institutions are students coming from the Portuguese-speaking countries, which offers a competitive advantage when Portuguese is used as the teaching language. As recognised by the working group appointed to design the national strategy for internationalisation of higher education, the Portuguese language is a major asset of the country's higher education system and, consequently, should be incorporated in its internationalisation strategy. On the other hand, competing for students from other countries in a progressively globalised market makes a shift to English as a teaching language necessary, but challenges the traditional core cultural values supported by the fact that Portuguese is the fifth-most spoken language in the world, and which may discourage the recruitment of students from Portuguese-speaking countries. However, an increase in the number of courses offered in English is also highly recommended by the report commissioned by the government. Therefore, Portuguese higher education institutions are faced with a difficult choice when defining their internationalisation strategies.

Last but not least, the coordination of European, national and institutional policies becomes a crucial issue as demonstrated by the case of higher education tuition fees. As there is no European guidance to follow with regard to education as a public good, the higher fees charged by Portuguese higher education institutions to foreign students may create competitive disadvantages and imbalances when compared to other European countries, where no or lower fees are charged. Finding the right balance between attractiveness and tuition levels may prove to be a difficult task.

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Final Analysis in a Comparative Perspective

Bologna Implementation and Its Objectives: Final Analysis in a Comparative Perspective

Part I—Policy

The first part of the book has addressed general issues of European policy making and implementation. We have analysed the Bologna Process and the issues that arise from its implementation. Since higher education is an area of considerable national sensitivity, implementing Bologna relies on soft law mechanisms, which makes convergence among member states difficult.

Policy Making and Implementation in Europe

In the European Union, it is not an easy task to produce legislation or policies that will be fully acceptable by all member states, a problem that the enlarging membership of the Union has made more pressing. One way to make the implementation of policies across all of the European Union possible consists in the use of flexibility, which is at the core of differentiated integration. In the framework of differentiated integration theory, the Bologna Process has been presented as an example of 'flexible integration' (at the start) and, subsequently, as an illustration of the 'Europe à la carte' model (Holzinger and Schimmelfennig 2012).

An alternative approach to allow for flexibility resorts to the purposeful use of vagueness and ambiguity in drafting European legislation and policy documents, which aims to overcome the incapacity of member

states to agree on essential goals and priorities (Dehousse 2005). As De Búrca recognises, the European Union Treaties and laws are frequently characterised 'by a high degree of fluidity and vagueness':

> European law has, as every EC lawyer knows, a rich tradition of evolving through the aid of such "*weasel words*", in the sense of terms which are ambiguous and open, and which are even chosen for these very characteristics. (De Búrca 1999: 10)

This ambiguity, which may be increased by the translation of documents into the language of each member state, allows for diverse interpretations at the national and institutional levels, thus making it possible to accommodate the meaning of European legislation to their particular political contexts and to eliminate unsavoury details. However, this technique is not without its dangers as it is always possible for the European Court of Justice (ECJ) to produce its own interpretation, which becomes binding. Indeed, the European Commission has asked for the intervention of the ECJ in a number of cases and the Court has systematically upheld the Commission's neoliberal stance (Fagforbundet 2008: 4). As recognised by the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (Fagforbundet):

> From the start, the ECJ has regarded it as its supreme duty to realise the fundamental principles of the EU Treaty on the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons. Whatever the politicians cannot – or dare not – clarify, is clarified by the judges in the ECJ. (Fagforbundet 2008: 4)

Another problem with policy implementation in Europe resides in the equilibrium between the powers of the European Commission and those of the member states. Indeed, the operation of the European Union needs substantial delegation of power in the Commission, which raises problems that can be analysed in terms of delegation theories (Kassim and Menon 2002), as referred to in Chap. 2. In the case of the European Union, there are two characteristics that make implementation more problematic: there are multiple principals instead of a single one and their relative power varies considerably, and there is very large preference heterogeneity (Hawkins et al. 2006). This means that different countries can show very diverse preferences about the same problem or policy, which makes it easier for the agent (the Commission) to operate in ways that will not

satisfy every principal. Schäfer considers that the governance arrangement of the Union 'offers ample opportunity to act independently of their principals' (Schäfer 2004: 3).

The traditional Community method, based on delegation of power from the member states to the Commission, the passing of European-wide legislation and the role of the ECJ in its enforcement, allowed the Commission to progressively increase its competencies. This process was backed by the ECJ's extensive interpretation of its mandate (Schäfer 2004). This phenomenon has been nicknamed 'creeping competence' of the Commission, a problem recognised in a speech by John Major, the UK prime minister at the time:

> One of the greatest concerns has been what many hon. Members in the past few years have referred to as the 'creeping competence' that comes about either by the abuse of articles in the treaty or by judgments of the European Court of Justice. (Prime-Minister John Major, House of Commons 1992)

In the early 1990s, there was growing criticism against the apparently unlimited erosion of the sovereignty of the nation-state (Dehousse 2002: 2), which was expressed in the revival of the subsidiarity principle in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. And when the adoption of the Lisbon strategy extended policies to domestically sensitive areas, it became necessary to design a methodology allowing governments to remain in control (Scharpf 2006). As argued by Dehousse, this methodology, the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), 'appeared as a compromise between a desire for common action, on the one hand, and the governments' desire to maintain some degree of control over tools they considered essential for their political future, on the other' (Dehousse 2005: 7). Member states are torn between the benefits derived from delegating in the Commission—including capture of policy externalities, resolution of disputes, and enhanced credibility (Hawkins et al. 2006)—and the dangers of opportunistic agent behaviour and undesirable political developments. This explains why member states have been avoiding further delegation of sovereignty and their preference for a nonbinding tool such as the OMC, the use of weasel words and the softening of the consequences of binding decisions. The present financial crisis has revealed the difficulties of the European Union to control the frequent compulsion of member states and politicians to free-ride and has made evident that there is large preference heterogeneity among member states.

As referred to in Chap. 2, soft law approaches such as the OMC have the advantage of allowing the implementation of policies without further delegation of power to the Commission (Borrás and Jacobsson 2004: 197), thus avoiding 'agency loss' (Schäfer 2004). However, there is a price to pay, because obtaining convergence may prove to be difficult, as the implementation of the Bologna Process has demonstrated. As there are no sanctions, the OMC lacks legal leverage and has to rely on mechanisms of naming and shaming (Ravinet 2008), which may not be very effective (Amaral and Veiga 2012). It is true that the Bologna Process is based on a political declaration, not on binding legislation, and includes non-member countries, which should preclude the direct intervention from the ECJ. However, 'the European Court of Justice has developed a body of jurisprudence that regulates issues such as access, capacity, quality, student allowances and labour market needs' (Kwikkers and van Wageningen 2012: 39), just by simply upholding the principles of free circulation of people and European citizenship. Some even claim that the ECJ has given 'at least an even more important contribution to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) than the Bologna Process' (Kwikkers and van Wageningen 2012: 39) (Chap. 2). This demonstrates, once more, the complexity of the European multi-level governance and how the Commission can increase its power with the support of the European Court's decisions.

EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICIES

Education in general, and higher education in particular, has always been considered an area of national sensitivity and, as such, protected by the subsidiarity principle (Gornitzka 2009). However, even in the case of higher education, the European Commission has made frequent attempts to extend its powers, including with the help of the ECJ, as described above. A good example was evident in the 1991 presentation of the *Memorandum on Higher Education* (European Commission 1991). For the Commission, the memorandum anticipated a more active role in EU higher education policy. The reaction of member states to such ambition was far from welcoming, which implied for some time at least 'an end to the EU's ambitions to develop formal responsibility in the area of higher education policy' (Gornitzka 2009: 116).

The Bologna Process was to become a golden opportunity for the European Commission to increase its competence in higher education (Martens and Wolf 2009). Initially, the Commission was not allowed

to sign the Bologna Declaration. Only later was it incorporated in the Bologna Follow-up Group (Chap. 3), in what was supposedly 'a "controlled inclusion", the goals of which had already been decided upon by national governments' (Martens and Wolf 2009: 90). However, the Commission was fast in taking 'advantage of the strategic linkages created by the national governments and incorporated education policy into their own agenda in a way quite different from what states had originally intended' (Martens and Wolf 2009: 100–101).

The second golden opportunity came in 2000 with the Council's approval of the Lisbon strategy (Chap. 3). Eric Froment, former president of the European University Association, pointed out some of the implications: 'The current tendency at European level is to look at the Bologna Process as an element of the Lisbon strategy. This is the result of the European Commission actions, and has important consequences …' (Froment 2007: 12). The Commission, by claiming that universities were an indispensable component in the new knowledge society, insinuated itself into a position of legitimacy that allowed it to intervene in the areas of research, innovation and higher education. The Commission not only introduced the economic rationale into the policy agenda of higher education by linking the Bologna objectives 'directly to economic gains expected from a common education area' (Martens and Wolf 2009), it also tried to implement an education market:

> The adoption by many countries of a common degree framework (e.g. the Bologna Declaration) redefining the nature and content of academic programmes is transforming what were once state monopolies over academic degrees into competitive international markets. (Dill et al. 2004: 330)

The new model exalts a university that 'is dynamic and adaptive to consumers and that gives priority to innovation, entrepreneurship and market orientation' (Olsen and Maassen 2007: 4). The neoliberal approach of the European Commission has full support in the ECJ, which assumes as its supreme duty to protect the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons. A good example of this approach has been the passing of the European Directive 2006/123/EC of the European Parliament and the Council, also known as the Services Directive or the Bolkenstein Directive (Chap. 3), aiming at establishing a single market for services within the European Union. This directive explicitly excludes areas such as health, environment, public health and security and even less noble sectors such

as gambling. However, it does not explicitly exclude education, although it excludes the national education systems. Under the Services Directive, a provider from country A is allowed to offer its education services in country B, provided the offered study programmes are accredited in the country of origin, where the provider is registered.

The Knowledge Society, Bologna and the Lisbon Strategy

The Bologna Declaration proposed the concept of a 'Europe of Knowledge' as an 'irreplaceable factor of social and human growth', while the 2000 Lisbon strategy aimed at transforming the European Union into 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world' within a decade (Chaps. 3 and 5).

Robert E. Lane (1966) was the first author to use the term 'knowledgeable society' in the meaning of a new society where scientific reasoning prevailed, reducing the significance of politics. However, it was Peter Drucker (1969) who referred to the 'knowledge society', regarding 'knowledge as central to modern society and as the foundation of its economy and social action' (Stehr 2010: 4). Daniel Bell (1973) also used this term interchangeably with 'post-industrial society'. The driving force of the new economy has become knowledge and services, and knowledge-intensive products have been replacing material and labour-intensive products.

The idea of a knowledge-based society was initially viewed from an optimistic standpoint, as it apparently promised a future with better life conditions, more interesting work opportunities and better employment conditions. However, since the 1980s, this optimistic approach started to be questioned. Ulrich Beck (1986), in his seminal book *Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity*, introduced the concept of 'reflexive modernity', where he warned about the problems and risks resulting from the development of the industrial society, and how those risks can be 'prevented, minimised, dramatized and channelled' (Beck 1986: 19). Beck uses 'reflexive' in the sense of 'reflex' rather than 'reflection', as 'the notion is about social development arising as a reflex to previous decisions or activities which give rise to unintended or even surprising consequences' (Aiken 2000: 4). Beck, together with Giddens, argues that as humanity enters a new stage of modernity, reflexivity has become the main characteristic of society (Beck et al. 1996).

Beck has contended that, by the end of the last century, individualism will have taken hold of the imagination of people. The newly emerging, highly-educated information society requires skilled and well-educated work forces, not manual workers. The neoliberal policies, by making long-term employment obsolete, have increasingly valued a much better-educated worker, capable of continuously updating his capacities to remain employable and prepared to change employment several times during his lifetime. In return, this new class of workers has abandoned their traditional loyalty to the corporate institutions and 'reflected (hence reflexive modernity) back on their relationships with these institutions concluding that they no longer needed to make them primary in order to maximize their own individual self development and biographies' (Roxburgh (s/d): 2).

The emergence of knowledge-based economies makes a well-educated workforce the major resource of the post-industrial society and explains why the Lisbon strategy, aiming at implementing a knowledge-based economy, had pressing need to include a component of human capital development. This made the appropriation of the Bologna Process by the Lisbon strategy an irresistible temptation. Initially, the Bologna Process was associated with the generous idea of a unified landscape of European higher education, honouring the European character of unity in diversity and looking beyond economic objectives. In the words of Rüttgers, 'higher education has to be connected to values … with the foundations of our western culture' (Rüttgers 2013: 2). However, the appropriation of Bologna by the Lisbon strategy has changed this ideal and increased the pressure to make higher education relevant for the short-term needs and demands of the economy.

For Dehousse, the Lisbon strategy has a symbolic value, as it emerged as a concern of left-of-centre governments, elected after the mid-1990s, with social problems (Dehousse 2002), apparently counterbalancing the earlier efforts at building the European Monetary Union that favoured liberalisation and competition rules over social protection rules (Scharpf 2006). Therefore, we may regard the Lisbon strategy as aiming at creating a balance between pure economic competition and social cohesion (European Council 2000). However, some authors were strongly sceptical about the possible success of the strategy, 'Lisbon looks like the quintessential contemporary utopia' (Creel et al. 2005: 4), while others (Iversen and Wren 1998) argued that offering employment, income equality and fiscal restraint simultaneously was just impossible. Unfortunately, those sceptics were right and the Lisbon strategy proved to be a failure, as

demonstrated by the present high unemployment levels in Europe and the anaemic growth capacity of its economy. And, progressively, Europe has reinforced its neoliberal political stance, giving priority to the development of internal markets at any cost in detriment of socially friendly policies.

The idea of a European knowledge-based society has apparently been unable to solve some of the problems of the risk society and of individualism. The replacement of 'employment' with 'employability', one of the buzzwords of the Bologna Process, has contributed to the individualisation of social problems (Streckeisen 2009), by making unemployment or poverty the responsibility of individual misconduct. Under the Lisbon strategy, social problems derive from deficient knowledge, education and (occupational) training, making it the responsibility of each individual to invest in lifelong education in order to remain employable. Ulrich Beck (1986) considers that the individualisation of inequality has made irrelevant sociological concepts such as social class and estate. And Streckeisen further argues that governments are providing 'incentives and sanctions so that the jobless either engage in further training to improve their 'employability', or accept jobs they might have turned down before' (Streckeisen 2009: 186). For Streckeisen, the claim that social position depends on knowledge, that is, on investment in human capital by the individual, results in the individualisation of social problems, which contributes 'to the legitimization of power and social inequality by invoking a principle of equal opportunities that Bourdieu and others have so convincingly deconstructed' (2009: 188).

Higher education institutions are today under permanent pressure to supply the labour market with graduates having the skills necessary for the short-term needs of the economy, skills that change all the time and are to be evaluated as learning outcomes. This emphasis of Bologna on making higher education relevant for the labour market has further contributed to developing a utilitarian view of higher education as a key element in a strategy of economic growth and competitiveness (Sin and Neave 2014). And 'this permanent demand to match skills requirements serves as a mechanism to limit the relative autonomy of the education system vis-à-vis capitalist production' (Streckeisen 2009: 194).

But there are also problems with the research component of higher education institutions. The world is moving away from a traditional Mertonian paradigm, which considers science as open, communal, universal, disinterested and characterised by a sceptical habit of mind (Merton

1942), and promotes instead a vision of free, universal and non-commercial knowledge (Slaughter and Rhoades 2003). Slaughter and Rhoades argue that academic capitalism and institutional patent policies are transforming what was 'an academic public knowledge regime into an academic capitalist regime' (Slaughter and Rhoades 2003: 225) and the traditional idea of free and universal knowledge into the idea that 'rather than being shared, intellectual property is owned'.

Under the influence of corporate-led globalisation, the relative importance of knowledge for its own sake has declined relative to useful knowledge that may be used for improving the competitiveness of the economy. Even if curiosity, the love of challenge and other pure epistemic motives have not completely disappeared as drivers of research, 'economic interests, no matter how remote, have become increasingly important in driving and directing the growth of useful knowledge in the past century and a half' (Mokyr 2002: 10). This apparently seems to make true the classical Baconian utopia (Bacon 1620) of the promotion of a research agenda improving the useful arts, meaning technology (Mokyr 2002). There is increasing pressure on institutions to produce research that has direct relevance for the economy, which is visible in the nature of the research projects financed by the European Union. It is interesting to note that, in the words of the European Commission, the measures to complete and further develop the European Research Area aim at 'breaking down barriers to implement a single market for knowledge, research and innovation' (European Commission 2015), or that the European Commission has promoted the 'Innovation Union' as a strategy to make it easier to turn ideas into products and services, creating economic growth and jobs.

As argued, the development of the knowledge society requires well-educated populations, which promotes the emergence of mass or even universal higher education systems. In Europe, one of the Horizon 2020 targets consists of having at least 40% of 30–34-year-olds completing third level education. This makes higher education institutions in general, and universities in particular, very important tools in the European strategy for promoting a knowledge society.

However, the expansion of higher education systems observed over the last decades has not changed the social reproduction mechanisms denounced by Bourdieu and his colleagues (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970). This problem may be reinforced as the increasing popularity of rankings has led a number of countries to make substantial investments to establish research universities capable of competing at world level, which will create

stratified national higher education systems and a stratified EHEA (Neave 2012). This small and elite group of traditional research universities will be responsible for the task of creating new knowledge, while a large sector at the base will be the preferred tool for producing workers more directly suited for the labour market demands and will create space for preserving a protected research sector (Neave 2012).

From the Sorbonne to Yerevan

In 1998, four ministers of education of the larger European Union countries (France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom) decided to sign the Sorbonne Declaration (Chap. 5). They proposed the creation of an open European area for higher learning, which would facilitate mobility and recognition of studies based on two cycles, undergraduate and graduate, through the implementation of a credit system (ECTS), transferable and accumulative. Moreover, it was expected that progressive harmonisation of degrees and cycles would be achieved. The four ministers invited all other member states of the Union and other European countries to join this initiative. Jürgen Rüttgers (2013), former minister of education, science, research and technology and former minister president of North Rhine-Westphalia, argues that the Sorbonnne Declaration, which came as a surprise to most politicians and experts, was only possible because, at the time, the ministers of science and education of France, Italy and Germany were developing efforts to reform their national higher education systems. Martens and Wolf consider that it was in the ministers' strategic interest to use the intergovernmental policy arena to manipulate the existing distribution of formal institutional competencies in their domestic political systems (Martens and Wolf 2009: 77), using Europe both as a pretext and as a justification to lever the implementation of national reforms (Martens and Wolf 2009).

As said, the Sorbonne Declaration came as a complete surprise and some politicians were suspicious of what was seen as an attempt at creating a European Union at two speeds, with larger countries taking the lead and then asking the others to join (Veiga and Amaral 2009). Almost one year later, in June 1999, the Bologna Declaration was signed by the ministers of education of 29 European countries, including the ministers of all the EU member states. The Bologna Declaration is a political declaration, not a binding treaty, and was to be implemented using the ways of intergovernmental cooperation. Marçal Grilo, the Portuguese minister of

education who signed the Bologna Declaration, argued that it was meant to be a document of an exclusively political nature and all its words were analysed in great detail to avoid excessive inconvenience to any country. Such a document is both remarkable and vague (Veiga 2010). The word 'harmonisation', present in the Sorbonne Declaration, was carefully eliminated to avoid any temptation at introducing levelling mechanisms that might damage the diversity of cultures, languages and national education systems. National systems were supposed to converge, not be harmonised, which is a good example of the way European policies are designed and political documents are written, using carefully weighted wording to avoid creating adverse reactions from any member state.

The implementation of the Bologna Process served to legitimise domestic policies of member states. An earlier analysis, jointly released on 29 February 2000 by the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences and the Association of European Universities (then the Conférence des Recteurs Européens), argues:

> The Bologna Declaration is not a reform imposed upon national governments or higher education institutions. Any pressure individual countries and higher education institutions may feel from the Bologna Process could only result from their ignoring increasingly common features or staying outside the mainstream of change. (Confederation and CRE 2000: 1)

This confirms Neave's Omega thesis—namely that 'the major reforms in re-engineering the task, the resources, the priorities and their verification that governments required of the world of higher education' (Neave 2009: 49) were already underway when Bologna was signed.

In Bologna, the ministers decided to set up the Bologna Follow-up Group to oversee the Bologna Process between the biennial ministerial meetings. After Bologna, the ministers held meetings in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007), Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve (2009) and Budapest-Vienna (2010). The initial political strategy of the Bologna Process implementation aimed at demonstrating untarnished success. For Neave and Amaral (2008: 48), 'to move forward rapidly and successfully, the Bologna strategy needed to demonstrate as much to member states as to the higher education and scholarly communities generally, that it had moved forward rapidly and successfully'. Periodic reports presented a vision of success, measuring it by the passing of the necessary national legislation, as if policy implementation was a linear process. A good example is given by the 2001 Trends II report:

> The Bologna Declaration is on all agendas . . . It is mostly seen as confirming national priorities: this is the process' biggest strength, i.e. it 'crystallises' major trends and reveals that issues and solutions have a European dimension . . . The process is not (or no longer) seen as an intrusion, but as a source of information on *the most suitable way* (our italics) forward for Europe. (Haug and Tauch 2001: 1)

Moreover, the progressive addition of new objectives at each ministerial meeting conveyed an impression of dynamism and unfettered progress. For Veiga and Amaral, 'the objectives of Bologna have been increasing in quantity and refinement, and some say that this aims at keeping the impression of progress, of successful implementation (like riding a bicycle, if you stop you fall)' (Veiga and Amaral 2009: 135).

However, by 2007 the progress of the Bologna Process started to be analysed at the institutional level where implementation really takes place (Crozier et al. 2007). The reports, for the first time, abandoned the idea of a triumphant implementation march and revealed the existence of substantial problems concerning employability, the incorrect or superficial use of the ECTS, poor implementation of the Diploma Supplement, lack of incentives to mobility, ignorance of what are qualifications frameworks, problems with recognition of learning periods abroad and low expectations about widening access (Neave and Amaral 2008).

In 2010, during the Budapest-Vienna conference, which reunited higher education ministers to celebrate the decade anniversary of the Bologna Process, the EHEA was launched. The tones of confidence and triumph, which were common in the early days of Bologna, subsided, giving way to more cautious statements about the achievements of the Process. Ministers recognised that there were still unsolved problems and that the vision of the EHEA projected at the outset of the Bologna Process had not been fulfilled. The next decade was therefore to be dedicated to the consolidation of reforms. Two years later, in Bucharest, ministers admitted that problems still persisted and needed to be overcome 'by constant efforts to align national practices with the objectives and policies of the EHEA, while addressing those policy areas where further work is needed' (Bucharest Communiqué 2012: 1). Finally, at the Yerevan ministerial conference, five years after launching the EHEA, it was recognised that problems were still unsolved and ministers made a commitment 'to completing the work, and recognize the need to give new impetus to our cooperation. Today, the EHEA faces serious challenges' (Yerevan Communiqué 2015: 1).

Five years on from the launch of the EHEA, our analysis of Portugal as a case study has also shown that problems still remain with the achievement of the key objectives of the Bologna Process. The new Bologna degree structure has not enhanced employability; expectations regarding students' transition to the labour market after the first cycle are grim; mobility has registered modest growth; the mobility instruments have only moderate relevance for the academic community; and the attractiveness agenda is poorly articulated and subsumed to practical concerns related to the need to compensate for the diminishing student numbers and reduced funding.

IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS

The adoption of Bologna-related policies is dependent on the interpretation of principles (e.g. transparency, comparability, legibility) and instruments (such as the degree structure, the credit system or the Diploma Supplement) at three different levels: European, national and institutional (Chap. 4). As different actors have diverse expectations and may assume different meanings (Neave and Veiga 2013; Sin 2012; Sin and Saunders 2014), ensuring convergence is difficult and the implementation may result 'in 47 Bolognas with common traits' (Rudder 2010: 18). In the words of Marçal Grilo, the Portuguese minister of education who signed the Bologna Declaration, 'what is important is to understand that it is a political declaration, each party having surely its own intentions in its country' (Veiga 2010). As argued by Martens and Wolf, national governments may use intergovernmental arrangements as instruments 'to withdraw decision-making control from domestic actors or institutions and to manipulate the domestic context' (2009: 83). Or, following Thomson, states may be attracted to use 'institutions such as international law and diplomacy, which empower the state to overcome societal resistance to its policing practices' (1995: 226).

In the case of Bologna, each member state has had to produce the necessary legislation allowing for its implementation, which means that the Bologna Process, although voluntarily enacted, relies on national and institutional elements (Chap. 4). A number of authors (Musselin 2009; Gornitzka 2007; Krücken 2005; Witte 2006) recognise that the implementation of Bologna entails what Musselin designates renationalisation processes, as national authorities use Bologna 'to tackle domestic objectives or problems' (Musselin 2009: 185). The inclusion of national

objectives or problems promotes the observance of national agendas that reflect, more or less directly, cultural, institutional and socioeconomic factors. These might lead to either integration or differentiation, depending on the 'cognition and perceptions concerning problems and their solution' (Heinze and Knill 2008: 495). Musselin argues:

> … when the same measures are "applied" on different national settings, the latter incorporate the European measures and transform them into a specific national mixture (…) The local adaptations, national translations and side effects attached to each domestic implementation weaken the convergence potential of Bologna. (Musselin 2009: 186, 198)

As mentioned by Neave and Amaral, the legal framework is the responsibility of each member state (Neave and Amaral 2012), and, consequently, the reform outcomes are the result of discretionary decisions and practices taken at the national and institutional level, which did not play in favour of unlimited convergence, but promoted flexibility and differentiated integration (Veiga et al. 2015).

Part II—Practice: The Achievement of Bologna Objectives

The second part of this book has drawn on the Portuguese higher education system as a case study. It has paid attention to how the Bologna Process has changed institutional and academic practices and how it has affected outcomes in the three areas identified as key Bologna objectives: student employability, mobility and the international attractiveness of institutions.

Setting the Portuguese Case in Perspective

We have argued that the flexible implementation of the Bologna Process through the OMC, confounded by the location of actors on multiple levels, results in varied outcomes and, sometimes, unintended consequences. Additionally, Bologna was also given as an example of differentiated integration. We have also claimed that understandings of the Process abound and that Bologna is prone to interpretative dispersion. For this reason, one could argue that the limited achievement of the Bologna objectives in Portugal is just one particular national case, just one outcome in a variety

of possible outcomes enabled by the flexibility of the policy process. But is Portugal really unique in the way the reforms have played out and in the results they have achieved? In the following, we aim to put the Portuguese case in perspective and examine whether the current picture regarding the achievement of Bologna objectives in the aftermath of the reforms shares similarities with the situations in other European countries. Is Portugal an isolated case, or can we see it as a diagnostic instrument for a condition common to other countries? By analysing the consequences and outcomes of policy, we hope to bring the 'implementation loop' full circle by providing evidence that can inform further political strategies.

Looking at Portugal as a conjunctural diagnostic instrument therefore begs the following questions: Are there other countries with similar outcomes as regards the key objectives of employability or mobility? If so, can we identify similar phenomena or conditions that can explain these outcomes? In other words, can we look at the reform results mainly as a function of the policy process or should we also look at the broader contextual determinants? It is clear that part of the reasons for the underachievement of the Bologna objectives in Portugal is to be found in the nature of the political implementation of the Process (see Chap. 4), which, to complicate matters further, was delayed in Portugal (see Chap. 6). It is also to be found in the half-hearted institutional or academic engagement, for example with the employability agenda, or in the translation of the mobility objectives tailored to the Portuguese context, which we saw resulted in a rigid curriculum as an unintended consequence (see Chaps. 7 and 8). However, given that similar underachievement characterises some of the southern European countries that share similar socioeconomic conditions, as we will show below, we argue that the reasons are also to be found in the economic and social characteristics of the country.

Therefore, we wish to foreground context as an important determinant when assessing policy outcomes. When countries are urged to strive towards a shared objective by an unrealistic common deadline, the neglect of external factors, outside the educational arena, reveals political naivety or, rather, astuteness. This is a discourse of decontextualisation, which allows for holding the higher education constituencies responsible for underachievement. As in the case of the employability objective, institutions were attributed a utilitarian role: to equip students with the necessary skills to become employable. Despite mentions of changing labour markets and, later, the economic crisis and employment uncertainty, employability was held to be the individuals' responsibility and higher

education a vehicle to develop their employability (Sin and Neave 2014). If employability had been addressed by taking contextual determinants into account, this 'would have risked slowing the reform down' as it would have encouraged governments to do something about these determinants (Sin and Neave 2014) or to invoke these as obstacles to reform. But given Bologna's dependence on an image of rapid progress and evident success to sustain momentum (Neave and Amaral 2008), delayed implementation was not an option and differences in national context were not considered.

Foregrounding Context

In what follows, we aim to foreground the significance of context by resorting to the varieties of capitalism theory proposed by Hall and Soskice (2001). We do this bearing in mind that an economic rationale pervades most European policies. Both the European Commission and the Council have strongly emphasised the need to put higher education at the service of the economy. In 2007, the Commission wanted to see higher education 'making a strong contribution to the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs' (European Commission 2007), and the Council emphasised the role of universities 'in the transfer of knowledge to the economy and society as a main contribution to Europe's competitiveness and the need for closer cooperation between academia and the world of enterprise' (European Council 2007). Heinze and Knill (2008) argue that national conditions of cross-national policy convergence are associated with cultural, institutional and socioeconomic factors, and Beverly Barrett has already analysed the influences of political economy on implementing the Bologna Process (Barrett 2013), using Portugal and Spain as case studies.

The varieties of capitalism approach contends that each state has its own model of capitalism, shaped by culture, history, mentality and the economic–political system. National cases can be grouped under different models of market economies. Each model is characterised by particular macroeconomic policies, market coordination models, institutional configurations and interactions among economic actors, approaches to skills development, work organisation, and welfare. We will consider our findings about the achievement of the Bologna objectives in Portugal, specially related to employability, in comparison with other countries that share the same type of market economy and with countries with a different type of market economy. We will also consider European statistics on social and economic conditions, additionally relevant for the mobility objective. This

will allow us to establish the relationship, if any, between the degree of achievement of the Bologna objectives discussed in this book and national economic and social circumstances.

Hall and Soskice (2001) point to two main varieties of capitalism: coordinated market economies and liberal market economies. It is impossible to do full justice to the complexity of these varieties here. Therefore, we present succinctly those characteristics of the two varieties that influence employability: labour relations, wages and skills formation. In coordinated market economies, trade unions are powerful and they have great power of negotiation over wages and labour conditions at sector level. The high level of coordination of the market and the reduced vulnerability to profit fluctuation enable firms to pursue long-term production strategies that depend on workers with specific skills and high commitment, for which reason employees are usually offered long-term employment tenures. Therefore, workers feel incentivised to invest in and acquire highly specialised, sector-specific skills that will be rewarded through stable employment. In contrast, in liberal market economies, trade unions and employer associations are generally less powerful and cohesive, while negotiations over wage coordination and labour conditions are more difficult. Highly-fluid labour markets influence both firm and individual behaviour. In liberal market economies, it is relatively easy for firms to employ or lay off labour in order to take advantage of new opportunities, while production strategies based on commitments to long-term employment are less attractive. As a result, individuals are encouraged to invest in general skills, which are transferable across firms, and in career trajectories that contemplate frequent job changes. For workers who face short-term employment, career success thus depends on acquiring the general skills that can be used in many different work contexts. As a result, most educational programs from secondary through university levels, even in specialised areas such as engineering, stress 'certification' in general skills rather than the acquisition of more specialised competencies (Hall and Soskice 2001: 29–30).

Among the OECD countries, the Anglo-Saxon countries were classified, by Hall and Soskice (2001), as liberal market economies (the US, Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Ireland) and another ten, mostly Northern European, as coordinated market economies (Germany, Japan, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Austria). Portugal, together with five other countries (France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey) constitutes another type of capitalism, described as 'Mediterranean' (Hall and Soskice 2001: 21) or

'mixed market economies' (Hall and Gingerich 2004: 17). These countries have a large agrarian sector and recent histories of extensive state intervention, which led to capacities for non-market coordination in the sphere of corporate finance, but less-so in labour relations (Hall and Soskice 2001: 21). In the sphere of labour relations, more liberal arrangements are in place. Strategic coordination of labour relations is higher than in liberal market economies, but lower than in the coordinated market economies of Northern Europe, 'perhaps because their union movements are still divided along what used to be called "confessional" lines' (Hall and Gingerich 2004: 17). Therefore, it follows that employment security and worker rights are weaker, while the relationship between education and labour market, manifest in the type of skills formation, is less aligned than in coordinated market economies. Hall and Gingerich (2004, 33) also noted that levels of income inequality are not only higher in liberal versus coordinated market economies, but they have also increased much more rapidly there in recent years.

Portugal as a Conjunctural Diagnostic Instrument

We will look at the outcomes of the Bologna Process in Portugal in a comparative perspective. We will consider available indicators for graduate employability and student mobility in southern European countries with mixed-market economies and in northern European countries with coordinated market economies.[1] Comparative socioeconomic indicators will complement the analysis. These economic characteristics translate into different speeds in the achievement of Bologna reforms, as we will show in the following.

To begin with, a divide among the employment rates of recent graduates is immediately obvious from the Eurostat statistics (see Table 10.1). The coordinated market economies of northern European countries have much higher employment rates than the mixed-market economies of southern Europe. Moreover, over the past ten years, in the former, the employment of recent graduates has generally remained constant, always above 80%. In parallel, in the latter (except France), steep declines have occurred, especially so after 2009. Falls in graduate employment have been as dramatic as 20% in the case of Greece or Italy. In Portugal, graduate employment fell by 13.5% over the past ten years. The table below shows a selection of countries, illustrative of these tendencies.

Therefore, the outcomes of the Bologna reforms should not be understood independent of these tendencies. Indeed, Schomburg and Teichler (2011) examined the key results of the Bologna Process in

Table 10.1 Graduate employment in a selection of countries that are coordinated market economies or mixed-market economies

Country	2004	2009	2014
Austria	85.4	87.9	87.2
Germany	81.0	85.3	90.0
Denmark	82.6	87.9	83.7
Switzerland	86.1	86.7	87.5
Sweden	80.4	81.6	85.0
The Netherlands	91.5	92.9	86.2
France	76.4	77.3	75.2
Greece	63.8	65.2	44.3
Portugal	82.9	82.4	69.4
Italy	64.8	60.6	45.0
Spain	78.2	73.0	65.1

Source: Eurostat 2015.

several countries and the employability objective appears to have been much more successful in the countries with coordinated market economies. For example, Germany and Austria introduced the new Bologna degrees between 1998 and 2001. Both the German and the Austrian case studies (Guggenberger et al. 2011; Schomburg 2011), carried out about a decade after implementation, concluded that the fears about the acceptance of the newly created bachelor degrees by the labour market proved to be unjustified, as the majority of bachelor graduates were neither unemployed nor in poor or precarious employment in 2009/10. In both countries, employment rates were high for graduates of traditional programmes, bachelor graduates and master graduates alike. In Austria, 73 % of bachelor graduates were employed (compared to 82 % of the traditional programme graduates), while the rates of permanent employment for the two groups lay at similar levels (80 % and 82 %) (Guggenberger et al. 2011). In the German case, unemployment was as low as 2–4 % across the different types of graduates. A difference between the groups resided in the income levels, lower for bachelor graduates in both countries, while it was similar for master graduates and traditional programme graduates. Additionally, in Germany, the rates of stable, permanent employment were around 10 % lower in the case of bachelor graduates, who also reported a larger degree of mismatch between education level and studies because they felt overqualified (Schomburg 2011). Master graduates stood in the most favourable position when it came to employment security and income. However, although the

prospects for new bachelor graduates were somewhat worse than for the traditional graduates or master graduates in Austria and Germany, the great majority of bachelor graduates were effectively employed and with secure contracts, invalidating concerns about their labour market integration. The explanation we put forward is that the great capacity for coordination in the area of labour relations, typical of coordinated market economies, which translates into high levels of worker protection and contractual stability (Hall and Soskice 2001), guarantees, for new bachelor graduates also, the safety of investing in special skills and in education. As numbers show, their investment has indeed been rewarded with jobs at an adequate level of qualification for the majority of them (Guggenberger et al. 2011; Schomburg 2011).

Moving to mixed-market economies, a different picture unfolds. In Italy, for instance, which introduced the Bologna degree structure at about the same time as Germany and Austria (in 2001), only 62% of the bachelor graduates not already employed at graduation managed to secure employment one and a half years later. Of these, only 36% held permanent employment (Cammelli et al. 2011). Considering all the graduates in the 2008 cohort (surveyed in 2009), 43% were on a permanent contract (compared to 80% in Austria), while 40% were on atypical contracts (fixed-term, ad hoc, working without contract, and so on). Cammelli and colleagues also alerted to the dangers of over-education, pointing to a lower probability of bachelor graduates being satisfied with their on-the-job use of the skills acquired at university, as compared with pre-reform graduates. Moreover, they highlighted the low level of earnings for highly qualified human resources, which represented an additional flaw linked to the production structure of the country, as Italian firms had a low demand for graduate manpower. They warned that a dramatic situation for young graduates was forthcoming:

> … all the authorities involved in the management of the higher education system should take into consideration the risk that a whole generation of young graduates (…) can be trapped, especially in the midst of a global economic crisis, between a production system which is no able to recruit them and a research system that lack resources'. (Cammelli et al. 2001: 167)

We encounter similar problems of labour market insertion and poor contractual conditions in Spain. The reforms in Spain did not imply a foreshortening of the first degree, as the Spanish degree structure

consists of a four-year bachelor and one- or two-year masters. Thus, the question here is not so much the employability of bachelor graduates, but of graduates in general. We have not been able to obtain data for Spain as a whole, but only from Galicia and Catalonia. For Galicia, where data are available for 2009/10 master graduates and 2010/11 bachelor graduates, two years after graduation the former were employed in larger numbers than the latter (73.7% compared to 63.3%) (Axencia para a Calidade do Sistema Universitario de Galicia [ACSUG] 2013, 2014). As to securing permanent employment, the rate lay at 41.1% for master graduates. Although no numbers are available for the employment type of bachelor graduates, only 14.4% were preparing to compete for positions in public employment (associated with contractual security), as opposed to 29.5% in 2006/7. Over the same period, the ACSUG report (2014) noted declining salaries for bachelor graduates, as well as an increase in the average time to find a job. In Catalonia, the employment rates of 2010/11 graduates were, three years after graduation, lying at 83.72% (Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya 2015), therefore higher than in Galicia. This compared to 93.51% for the 2004/5 graduates surveyed in 2007. Of these, just under half (48.73%) held permanent employment, a decrease of almost 10% compared to the 2004/5 graduates surveyed in 2008. Over this period, there was evident deterioration of employment quality: graduate unemployment went up from 3.1% to 11.89%; public sector employment decreased by 11%; and full-time employment decreased by 8.82%. In 2014, almost a fifth of graduates (19.67%) held jobs for which no university degree was required. As the report argues, the economic context has clearly been a determining factor as far as entry to the labour market is concerned (Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya 2015: 14). At the same time, the report underlines the role that higher education institutions can play to help alleviate the adverse job market conditions:

> Professional guidance for university students needs to be heightened to ensure that graduates, on completing their studies, have the necessary skills to manage their professional careers within a context of uncertainty, meaning that they are flexible and can adapt to a changing socioeconomic environment, identify strategic investment in education and training, and network, amongst other things. (Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya 2015: 14)

Research literature and reports, in fact, point to the inadequate attention to employability in Spanish higher education and Spanish universities (Alonso et al. 2009; Caballero et al. 2014; Camacho and Medina 2012). Already at national level, the Spanish qualifications framework was drafted without the collaboration of employers (Camacho and Medina 2012) and the concepts of learning outcomes or competencies are alien terminology for both students and employers (Alonso et al. 2009; Camacho and Medina 2012). A survey of 230 Spanish institutions (Caballero et al. 2014) revealed low commitment to employability, as regards skills development, learning methodologies (problem- or project-based learning), or collaboration and communication with employers. The national strategy for higher education, *Estrategia Universidad 2015* (Ministerio de Educación 2010), too, pinpointed the inadequate attention to employability in study programmes as one of the major weaknesses of Spanish higher education.

Admittedly, the insufficient engagement with the employability agenda and poor dialogue with employers in higher education, also observed in Portugal (see Chap. 7), have had a negative influence on graduate employability. But the context, as we argued before, again appears as a key determining factor. As the report on the employability of Catalonian graduates stated, the crisis affected most indicators associated to employment quality:

> The economic context is clearly a determining factor as far as entry to the labour market is concerned (…) Whereas the effects of the crisis on the rate of employment and education-job skills match were very moderate in the 2011 study (2007–2008 graduating cohort) except for study programmes connected with the building and construction sector, in the 2014 survey (on the 2010–2011 graduating cohort) they are to be seen in almost all of the indicators associated with employment and job quality. This difference between the two most recent studies can be explained by the fact that a large number of graduates in the 2007–2008 graduating cohort already had a job prior to the start of the crisis, whereas the context for those who graduated in 2010–2011 and were looking for work was that of economic crisis. (Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya 2015: 11)

The economic slowdown and the more modest job creation of the past decade, made worse by the recent economic crisis, have occurred in parallel with a massive expansion of higher education and growing cohorts of graduates. This represents a risky combination, according to Figueiredo et al. (2015). Their study of Portuguese graduates' transition to employment observed a higher degree of complexity and heterogeneity in the

graduate cohort and the workplace, likely to lead to maladjustments between demand and supply of qualifications and skills, as well as mismatches between education and work. As we have shown before, Italy and Spain are already confronted with such problems. In a European context marked by substantial increases of young graduates and limited absorption capacities of the labour market, we may expect 'higher levels of mismatches which will lead to over-qualification and/or underemployment' (Figueiredo et al. 2015: 16). The authors question to what extent the initiative to deal with mismatches should be assumed by the labour market, rather than placing all responsibility on graduates (or, we may add, on higher education and its tuning to labour market needs):

> …more research is needed in order to understand if we are moving closer to a situation in which the burden for flexibility and adaptability is placed upon the shoulders of new cohorts of graduates or if we should expect a reasonable degree of flexibility in a changing labour market to accommodate to the existing supply of qualifications and skills. (Figueiredo et al. 2015: 16)

The inflexibility of the labour market hinted to in the above paragraph, as well as its insufficient absorption of graduates, may, in the Mediterranean countries, be related at least partially to the employers' low educational level. The Eurostat labour force survey revealed that, across the European Union, an average of 17.4% of employers had less than secondary education in 2014. However, the numbers were higher in the mixed-market economies of southern Europe, and considerably so in some cases (Spain with 37.2%, Portugal with 58.1%, Italy with 35.7% or Greece with 22.1%). France was the only exception with only 11.5% of employers with less than secondary education. Recalling Hall and Soskice's (2001) arguments, mixed-market economies are countries in which agriculture has traditionally represented a large economic sector, which is a possible reason for the high levels of under-education. In contrast, in the coordinated market economies of northern Europe, the percentage of employers with low educational levels was generally lower than the European average, or around average (Germany with 6%, Austria with 6.9%, the Netherlands with 17.5%, or Sweden with 17.6%). Employers who did not benefit from higher education themselves, present in larger proportions in Mediterranean countries, are likely to value higher education qualifications in a lesser degree and be less willing to employ graduates, for whom they may have to pay more.

Under-education among employers is, in fact, mirrored by the educational level of the population as a whole, as the Eurostat indicators for the educational levels of those aged 25 to 64 show. Against a European average of 24.2% in 2014, 43.3% of the 25–64 age group had less than upper secondary attainment in Spain, with 56.7% in Portugal, 40.6% in Italy and 31.6% in Greece, although educational levels are higher in the younger age groups. Going back to the propositions of the varieties of capitalism theory, a feature of mixed-market economies is the poor level of coordination in the area of labour relations, characterised by more liberal arrangements than is the case of coordination in the area of corporate finance (Hall and Gingerich 2004). One hypothesis, worthy of further research exploration, is the existence of a relationship between the poor coordination in the area of labour relations and the lower education levels of the workforce as a whole, who, consequently, possess a poor capacity for dialogue and negotiation to achieve better employment security and stronger worker rights.

What appears certain from our analysis is that, in terms of employability, the labour markets with greatest difficulties of graduate absorption and which offer more adverse employment conditions, in terms of job security, income or education–work match, are the Mediterranean countries classified as mixed-market economies. These countries also display worse social conditions when compared to the northern European countries, no doubt related to the economic conditions. For instance, Eurostat figures show that in 2014 more people were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Portugal (27.5%), Spain (29.2%) or Italy (28.3%), than was the case in Germany (20.6%), Austria (19.2%) or the Netherlands (16.5%). A Eurostudent report (Orr et al. 2011) also shows broad north–south differences in students' funding sources, although these do not necessarily align to the distinction between coordinated and mixed-market economies. Around half of students' income in Spain or Portugal originates mostly from the family, while these countries provide little public support for students (11% and 5%, respectively). In contrast, in several northern countries (Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, or Sweden) public support plays a major role in student funding.

These indicators are also extremely relevant for the Bologna objective of student mobility. Student participation in mobility programmes depends on social background (Orr et al. 2011; Petzold and Peter 2014; Teichler 2012) and funding availability. Moreover, family support was considered the primary source of funding for mobility for over 50% of

students with foreign enrolment experience in Spain, Italy, or Portugal, while public support was the main source for students in countries like the Netherlands, Sweden or Norway (Orr et al. 2011: 180). Therefore, mobility figures must be interpreted in light of these socioeconomic differences. In Germany, the proportion of mobile students neared 30% (Schomburg 2011); in Austria it lay at 35% for master students and 13% for bachelor students, therefore rather high for graduates overall (Guggenberger et al. 2011), and Flanders is very ambitiously aiming for 33%, since many institutions have already reached the 20% European objective (Department for Education and Training 2013). At the same time, the proportion of mobile students is estimated at 14% in Italy (Cammelli et al. 2011), while in Portugal, as we have seen in Chap. 8, their share is just over 7%. Similar considerations could be made about the attractiveness. UNESCO (2015) reports that in 2013 the inbound mobility rate (number of students from abroad studying in the country as percentage of total enrolments in the country) was 3.9 for Portugal, 4.4 for Italy, 2.9 for Spain and 4.2 for Greece, to be compared against 7.1 for Germany, 10.2 for France or 17.5 for the UK.

Summing up, we can conclude that the Bologna Process has effectively generated changes in Portuguese higher education, at the level of national policies, in institutional priorities and academic practices. And yet, contrary to the expectations of the reform, the changes have not necessarily led to the fulfilment of its goals. The reforms have been unsuccessful in achieving the key objectives we have analysed here—employability, mobility and attractiveness of higher education institutions—and, moreover, the differences between what were the ambitions of the Bologna Process and the outcomes are looming large. Our findings suggest that the Portuguese achievements seem to make a limited contribution to the construction of the EHEA.

Certainly, we can consider the peculiarities of policy implementation in the Bologna Process, with the multiple levels that make and shape policy and the difficulties of European-wide coordination, as partly responsible for the insufficient achievement of Bologna's objectives. We can also partly attribute the underachievement to the nature of policy making in Portugal, with the specificities we noted in this book. The unconvincing commitment of institutions and academics to the reforms has played a part, too. However, setting the Portuguese case in perspective and comparing it with other countries has drawn our attention to another determinant: the context and the significance of economic and social characteristics. This

has been rather neglected both in European policy making and in research and analysis of the implementation of the Bologna Process to date, which have appeared to ignore the fact that higher education does not exist in a decontextualised vacuum (except maybe the Eurostudent reports). The EHEA is a patchwork of socioeconomic realities and urging countries to reach identical objectives in the same time horizon is both unrealistic and unfeasible. Choosing to continue to pay lip service to the socioeconomic context, policy makers run the risk of having the reforms doomed to failure right from the start and of attributing blame to the wrong parties, while scholars run the risk of misinterpreting the outcomes of policy and the reasons behind them.

NOTE

1. Eastern European countries, as previous literature has suggested, face even greater difficulties in the fulfilment of the objectives of the Bologna Process given the post-communist social and economic transformations (Brankovic et al. 2014; Kwiek 2004). Although this implies yet another speed of reform success, these countries will not be included in the analysis.

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