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## **Higher Education Without Discrimination: The Bologna Process and European Values\***

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*This paper explores the European values underpinning the Bologna Process that all countries who participate in this Process are signing up to. Whilst acknowledging that the level of implementation of these values varies among the member states, the paper argues that it is not a question of choosing some of these values and disregarding others, but that they must not be separated as they are in fact the universal values set down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is paramount for an inclusive (higher) education that it provides equal access, equal opportunities, and equal representation in the curricula for all groups of society. Countries that are currently not part of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) created by the Bologna Process, including the unrecognized or partially recognized countries, can and should nonetheless model their higher education systems on the Bologna Process by implementing these values in their educational reforms, which will create the foundations for them to benefit from the opportunities that the Bologna Process offers. However, at the moment decisions about higher educational reforms in unrecognized countries and the wider EU Eastern Partnership Region are inextricably linked to the fundamental decision about how the leaderships of these countries want to see their societies develop after the collapse of the Soviet order.*

### **Keywords**

Bologna Process, European Higher Education Area, unrecognised countries, European values, rule of law, democracy, human rights.

The right to education is one of the fundamental human rights that everyone is entitled to irrespective of where he or she lives: be it in a recognised or an unrecognised country. It was set down in Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)<sup>1</sup>, and confirmed in Articles 13 and 14

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<sup>1</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Available at:

of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 16 December 1966.<sup>2</sup>

Both UDHR (Article 26, Paragraph 2) and ICESCR (Article 13, Paragraph 1) link the right to education with underpinning values: ‘Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.’

Whilst there can be no argument that everyone has a right to education, this right does not *per se* mean that all countries are entitled to sign up to the Bologna Process and take advantage of the opportunities it offers. In Europe, the right to education is recognized in Article 2 of the first Protocol of 20 March 1952 to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms which affirms: ‘No person shall be denied the right to education’.<sup>3</sup> There is no further reference in this Protocol to underpinning values, but the Convention refers in its Preamble explicitly to the UDHR, stating as its aim ‘securing the universal and effective recognition and observance of the Rights therein declared.’ The 1997 Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention), one of the guiding documents for the Bologna Process, picks up the wording from the UDHR and ICESCR when it sets out in its Preamble ‘that higher education should play a vital role in promoting peace, mutual understanding and tolerance, and in creating mutual confidence among peoples and nations.’<sup>4</sup>

The Bologna Process was launched on 19 June 1999 with the signing of the Bologna Declaration by the Ministers of Education of 29 European countries. Whilst the main aim of the Declaration was the creation of a

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<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr> (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>2</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx> (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Council of Europe, Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, available at: <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/Treaties/Html/005.htm> (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe, Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, available at: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/165.htm> (accessed 21 July 2014).

European Higher Education Area (EHEA) through a number of objectives to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education and foster student mobility and employability, it also referred to 'shared values' and the sense of 'belonging to a common social and cultural space' as underpinning principles of the 'Europe of Knowledge'.<sup>5</sup>

The Bologna Process sits outside the institutions of the European Union and brings together EU and non-EU countries (it currently comprises 49 member states<sup>6</sup>), and it is often criticized for putting too much emphasis on increasing the international competitiveness and attractiveness of the European higher educational system, i.e. for pursuing a primarily economic agenda, focusing on technical aspects such as the credit system, the comparability of degrees, a system of quality assurance and staff and student mobility, and paying only lip service to 'European culture' and 'European values'.<sup>7</sup> However, many of the official policy documents refer back, directly or indirectly, to the values set out in the founding documents of the European Communities and the European Union, such as freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and respect for the universal human rights. The 2009 Ministerial Meeting of the Bologna Process explicitly introduced a social dimension to European higher education policies, calling for 'equal opportunities to quality education' and 'widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education.'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 'The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999: Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education', available at: [http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/bologna\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/bologna_declaration.pdf) (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>6</sup> For a list of member countries, see <http://www.ehea.info/members.aspx> (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Chris Lorenz, Will the universities survive the European Integration? Higher Education Policies in the EU and in the Netherlands before and after the Bologna Declaration, [http://www.ii.umich.edu/UMICH/ces/Home/Resources/Michigan\\_Paper\\_Series/Lorenz\\_Will\\_Universities\\_Survive.pdf](http://www.ii.umich.edu/UMICH/ces/Home/Resources/Michigan_Paper_Series/Lorenz_Will_Universities_Survive.pdf) (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009: The Bologna Process 2020 – The European Higher Education Area in the New Decade, Article 9, available at: [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Leuven\\_Louvain-la-Neuve\\_Communique\\_April\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Leuven_Louvain-la-Neuve_Communique_April_2009.pdf) (accessed 21 July 2014).

Tigran Torosyan rightly calls the Bologna Process ‘a civilisational programme’.<sup>9</sup>

Taking part in the Bologna Process is a voluntary decision made by each country. The Bologna Declaration does not have the legal quality of a treaty or convention, and there are, therefore, no legal obligations for the signatory states to comply with the aims and objectives. The level of implementation and the priorities vary from country to country. There is nothing that prevents countries from outside the European Higher Education Area to model their own higher education systems on the Bologna Process reforms. In fact, Australia is currently in the process of doing just that; following a joint declaration signed in 2007 by the EU Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth and the Australian Minister for Education, Science and Training to strengthen their higher education links,<sup>10</sup> Macquarie University in New South Wales became the first Australian university to align its degree system with the Bologna Process as of January 2013.<sup>11</sup>

This is the model that unrecognized countries can easily follow, and it does not even require any prior joint declaration. However, signing up to the Bologna Process does not just mean the introduction of a higher education system based on undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral studies, the establishment of a transparent credit system, ensuring comparability and quality and promoting mobility of students and staff. It also means signing up to and endorsing the European values that underpin the Bologna Process. However vaguely they might be expressed in the various policy documents, the Bologna Process is based on common values and is more than just an extension of neo-liberal policies, a commodification of knowledge or a

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<sup>9</sup> **Torosyan T., Vardanyan A.**, Developments Paradigm for Social Sciences and Higher Education in Post-Soviet States, *Armenian Journal of Political Science*, 2014, 1, pp. 5-22.

<sup>10</sup> Joint Declaration on Education, 18 April 2007, available at: [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/australia/eu\\_australia/political\\_relations/agreement\\_s/joint\\_declaration\\_on\\_education/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/australia/eu_australia/political_relations/agreement_s/joint_declaration_on_education/index_en.htm) (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>11</sup> **Harrison D., and Rosenberg J.**, ‘No longer content to share the honours’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 November 2011, <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/no-longer-content-to-share-the-honours-20111121-1nqor.html> (accessed 21 July 2014); see also Macquarie University, ‘Research Training: New Postgraduate Model’, [http://mq.edu.au/about\\_us/faculties\\_and\\_departments/faculty\\_of\\_arts/mhpir/modern\\_history/masters\\_of\\_research-mres](http://mq.edu.au/about_us/faculties_and_departments/faculty_of_arts/mhpir/modern_history/masters_of_research-mres) (accessed 21 July 2014).

marketization of higher education provision. Countries who want to benefit from the opportunities that the Bologna Process offers would be well advised not only to demonstrate a willingness to implement these underpinning values in their educational systems but also take first steps towards addressing deficits where they exist.

Kosovo might serve as an example of the complexities that are involved here, and the problems that such a process of reforms faces. Kosovo is not party to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe and not a formal member of the Bologna Process. The reconstruction of Kosovo's higher education provision after the 1999 war was assisted by British universities, with funding provided by the UK Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to help develop new curricula at the University of Pristina, the most important higher education institution in Kosovo.<sup>12</sup> For much of the 1990s, there was *de facto* educational segregation in Kosovo; all teaching at the University of Pristina was in Serbian, and ethnic Albanian staff and students were dismissed: they were instead forced to cobble together a parallel system, often holding classes in private homes. After the 1999 war, the United Nation Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) tried to 'de-politicize and democratize the system', well aware that (higher) education would play 'the key role in peace building'.<sup>13</sup> Bache and Taylor document the difficulties that the British assistance faced in Kosovo when trying to create a higher education system that would bring it in line with the rest of Europe and reflect UNMIK's vision of 'a multi-ethnic, pluralist, liberal university based on the Western model'.<sup>14</sup> In particular the older generation of ethnic Albanians favoured a curriculum that reflected Albanian national views.

Today, on paper, everything looks fine: Article 47 of Kosovo's Constitution guarantees the right to education and requires public institutions to 'ensure equal opportunities to education for everyone in accordance with

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, **Bache I., and Taylor A.**, The Politics of Policy Resistance: Reconstructing Higher Education in Kosovo, *Journal of Public Policy*, 2003, vol. 23, pp. 279-300; see also **Kostovicova D.**, Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2005; **Pichl E.**, The State of Higher Education in Kosovo. 1999, Available at <http://cicic.ca/docs/en/app6.pdf> (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>13</sup> From the 2000 UNMIK Report 'Focus Kosovo – Social Affairs', cited in Bache and Taylor, p. 289.

<sup>14</sup> **Bache and Taylor**, ..., p. 290.

their specific abilities and needs.<sup>15</sup> The inclusion of minorities is addressed, among others, in the Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo,<sup>16</sup> and the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan for the five-year period 2011–2016 confirms as one the most important priorities the need to develop and support ‘an inclusive system of education enabling equitable access to quality education’.<sup>17</sup>

However, the reality on the ground does not match this positive impression: education continues to separate people, and the most important factor that undermines all efforts of well-meaning educationalists to set up an inclusive cross-ethnic school and university system is a resurgence of thinking on national or nationalistic lines.

The Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), which sets out, in Article 8, the right of minorities to be taught in their respective language (this includes higher education provision), is often regarded as a panacea for all these problems.<sup>18</sup> However, Kosovo and the wider region show that rather than bridging the ethnic divide, education provided in the various regional or minority languages tends to widen the gap between the ethnic group because it all too easily leads to,

- firstly, separate lessons for the children of the different ethnic communities in some disciplines;
- secondly, different curricula for the disciplines that are taught separately, reflecting only the perspective of the respective ethnic community;

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<sup>15</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 47, available at: <http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/ConstitutionIKosovo.pdf> (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Republic of Kosovo, Office of the Prime Minister, Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Kosovo 2009–2015 (December 2008), pp. 20-5, [http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/zck/repository/docs/Strategy\\_for\\_the\\_Integration\\_of\\_Roma,\\_Ashkali\\_and\\_Egyptian\\_communities\\_2009-2015.pdf](http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/zck/repository/docs/Strategy_for_the_Integration_of_Roma,_Ashkali_and_Egyptian_communities_2009-2015.pdf) (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2011–2016, p. 11, available at: [http://www.masht.gov.net/advCms/documents/KESP\\_2011\\_2016.pdf](http://www.masht.gov.net/advCms/documents/KESP_2011_2016.pdf) (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Council of Europe, European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Available at: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/148.htm> (accessed 21 July 2014). The ECRML came into force in Armenia on 1 May 2002; Kosovo has not signed it yet.

- thirdly, teaching of students of the different ethnic communities in different buildings, i.e. a complete physical separation: no disciplines are shared any more.

This happens at all levels of education, including higher education, with the University of Pristina now basically attended by ethnic Albanian students only, and ethnic Serbian students attending the Serbian-language university in Mitrovica in northern Kosovo, funded by the Serbian government in Belgrade and run in line with the Serbian system of higher education.<sup>19</sup> This means that the situation of the 1990s is now largely reversed: most ethnic Serb schoolchildren and university students have opted out of the mainstream Kosovo educational system and attend classes paid for by the Serbian government in Belgrade and taught, in many cases, in private homes. Denisa Kostovicova concludes that educational segregation prevailed after the 1999 war just as it did before the war: ‘The UNMIK’s initial attempts to reopen the university in Kosovo as an open and democratic institution, for all students regardless of ethnic background, and without segregation, came to nought.’<sup>20</sup>

Separate even if equal does not work (and in most cases separate is not equal) – and it goes against the spirit of the Bologna Process. Inclusive education at all levels means that curricula and learning environments must bridge national or ethnic divides, and ensure that former enemies or adversaries learn together and learn from each other. All unrecognized countries have a long history of terrible violence and war, but they must understand – and accept – that no one side has the monopoly on suffering and that no one side is made up solely of perpetrators. All sides suffered, all sides committed violence – and curricula must be based on a mutual acceptance of everyone’s pain, experiences and history.

However, inclusive education does not only mean including former enemies or adversaries on an equal basis. It means equal access, equal opportunities, and equal representation in the curricula for all groups of

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<sup>19</sup> The university goes officially by the name of University of Pristina at Mitrovica, reflecting the Serbian view that it is a parallel institution to the University of Pristina in the capital of Kosovo. See **Brajshori M., and Jovanovic I.**, ‘Kosovo, Serbia debate status of university in Mitrovica’, *Southeast European Times*, 7 March 2013, Available at [http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/setimes/features/2013/03/07/feature-03](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2013/03/07/feature-03) (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>20</sup> **Kostovicova D.**, p. 208.

society. For the wider EU Eastern Partnership Region this means in particular:

*Ethnic Minorities:*

Ethnic minorities continue to face marginalization and various forms of discrimination, including access to education, in many countries of the EU Eastern Partnership Region. Roma and Jews are often also targets of discrimination in countries where they live, not only by society at large, but sometimes also by the state authorities. Anti-Semitism and anti-Romaism are if anything on the rise in these countries.<sup>21</sup>

*Religious Beliefs:*

Most Eastern Partnership countries have provisions in place that guarantee the freedom of religion and belief. However, the actual practice is often deficient, with the dominant religion enjoying privileges, including in educational provisions, often informal and uncodified, while other religious groups face restrictions and intolerance which are not addressed because of the lack of preventative legislation. Greater tolerance and acceptance of religious minorities are widely regarded as a threat to national traditions and national identity.<sup>22</sup>

*Women:*

Again, most Eastern Partnership countries have provisions in place that guarantee gender equality, but women's rights are not consistently implemented or enforced. Women continue to face discrimination in employment, and whilst there is usually equality of access to higher education based on merit, it is arguable how far women's concerns are reflected in the curricula and the general learning environment, and how far they are required to adopt the traditional male perspective and behaviour in order to succeed or find themselves restricted to traditional female roles such as teaching and nursing.<sup>23</sup>

*Disabled People:*

Whilst there are laws against discrimination of disabled people, they are rarely effectively enforced. The social stigma against disabled people

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<sup>21</sup> See *Yearbook 2010-11 Human Rights and Democratization Eastern Partnership Region*, compiled by Benjamin Bronstein and Charlotte Freeman, Yerevan: Yerevan State University, 2011; and *Yearbook 2011-12 Human Rights and Democratization Eastern Partnership Region*, compiled by Benjamin James Barnard, Yerevan: Yerevan State University, 2012, entries 'Ethnic Minorities' and 'Roma'.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, entries 'Freedom of Religion'.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, entries 'Women'.



remains high, meaning that they find it difficult to exercise their right to education, including higher education. Inclusive education bringing disabled and non-disabled children together remains the exception at all levels, not least because a lack of step-free access to schools and universities, making it difficult for disabled people to enter lectures halls, classrooms and laboratories together with their non-disabled peers.<sup>24</sup> However, studies from western countries have shown that stigma, prejudices and intolerance of disabled people are best addressed by inclusive education in the same classroom: it is better for the children, and it is better for society at large. The United Nations' 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities explicitly defines in Article 1 as its purpose: 'to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.'<sup>25</sup>

#### *Sexual Orientation:*

This is arguably one of the most sensitive and controversial issues for all countries of the Eastern Partnership Region. Whilst homosexuality has been officially decriminalized, LGBTQ people continue to face widespread ignorance, intolerance, rejection, marginalization, discrimination and outright violence; they are regarded as 'alien' or 'a disease' who intend to 'undermine' the traditional ways of life.<sup>26</sup> In September 2011, the European Parliament expressed 'its concern regarding the numerous human rights violations and widespread discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, both in the European Union and in third countries',<sup>27</sup> and Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the EU

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., entries 'Persons with Disabilities'.

<sup>25</sup> Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, available at <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml> (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>26</sup> See *Yearbook 2010-11*, entries 'Sexual Orientation', and *Yearbook 2011-12*, entries 'LGBT Persons'. The acronym LGBT has become the commonly used self-designation and is meant to embrace the diversity of sexuality and gender-based identities. In the United States and much of (western) Europe, it is now gradually replaced by LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer, to include non gender-binary identities.

<sup>27</sup> European Parliament Resolution of 28 September 2011 on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity at the United Nations Human Rights Council, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2011-0427+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (accessed 21 July 2014).

Commission, confirmed in a statement to the European Parliament ‘the commitment of the European Union to the entitlement of all people, wherever they are, to enjoy the full range of human rights – and to do so without discrimination’.<sup>28</sup>

Education has a crucial role to play in addressing prejudices and fighting discrimination and creating the conditions for respecting the equal rights and dignity of each and every citizen – both through its own practice of non-discrimination and unimpeded access for everyone based on merit alone and through curricula and a learning environment that actively teach tolerance towards other views, beliefs, practices, behaviour and opinions. Education without discrimination does not just mean that unrecognized countries should not be *per se* excluded from the benefits of the Bologna process. It also means that unrecognized countries (just like any other country) must not discriminate against any of their citizens because of ethnicity, religious belief, gender, disability, sexual orientation or any other factor. This is the essential and non-negotiable basis on which the Bologna process rests: there is no pick and choose from respecting and implementing these European values, which are in fact the universal values set down in the UDHR.

The Russian political scientist and philosopher Aleksandr Dugin, the ideologist of Neo-Eurasianism and often considered one of the brains behind Russian President Vladimir Putin’s vision of a resurgent Russia, recently denied again that there are any universal values, claiming that those which are regarded as universal are in fact a projection of ‘western’ values which the West tries to impose upon the rest of the world, such as gender equality or LGBTQ rights.<sup>29</sup> As the Bologna Process is driven by the European Cultural Convention, and participation is voluntary, the debate about the universality of European values is irrelevant in this context. Those countries who want to benefit from the opportunities that the Bologna Process offers, be they recognized or non-recognized countries, knowingly join a European

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<sup>28</sup> Statement by HR/VP Catherine Ashton to the European Parliament on 'Sexual orientation and gender identity at the United Nations Human Rights Council', Brussels, 28 September 2011, European Union, Document A 387/11, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/124774.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/124774.pdf) (accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>29</sup> See "Jeder Westler ist ein Rassist": Spiegel-Gespräch mit Alexander Dugin, *Der Spiegel*, No. 29, 15 July 2014, pp. 121-2.

process and therefore need to incorporate the underpinning European values in their educational reforms.

The Humanities and the Social Sciences have a central role for aligning the educational system with the values underpinning the Bologna Process: it is in these disciplines that the questions of rights, values and attitudes are first and foremost addressed. However, it cannot be done solely by an order from 'above', i.e. by the Ministry of Education or select educational leaders. Nando Sigona and Nidhi Trehan, writing on the situation of the Roma in Europe and the aim of their full inclusion in a common future, emphasize that it requires a new form of discourse to embed a step-change in popular attitudes and views: 'This dialogue therefore must move beyond the confines of liberal discursive platitudes about equality of Roma, and must enter the realm of co-existence of life-worlds where shared schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods once again become a reality for Roma'.<sup>30</sup> The same applies with regard to all groups of populations who face prejudice, intolerance, marginalisation, discrimination and (partial) exclusion: it requires a new kind of societal discourse which involves everyone on an equal basis.

Prevailing patterns of discourse have long ensured that the 'otherness' of these groups was heightened and perpetuated, and it will require a fundamental change in these patterns to transform the perception and the treatment of these groups. Instead of putting the emphasis on minority, religious, gender, disabled or LGBTQ rights which can end up reinforcing boundaries, whether real or imagined, exacerbate conflict and give rise to jealousies, the emphasis should be more on mainstreaming these issues, on solidarity and on building trust and creating cross-ethnic, cross-religious, cross-gender, cross-sexual bonds. In order to address deep-seated traumas and design a common future which is not based on (forced) assimilation or incorporation of one side or the other, this discourse must also include sharing, understanding and embracing each other's experiences – and, returning to higher education, reflecting them in the curricula and the general learning environment.

Obviously, higher educational developments cannot be de-coupled from primary and secondary educational developments: university students

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<sup>30</sup> **Sigona N., and Trehan N.,** Conclusion: A 'People's Europe' for Romani Citizens?, in **Sigona N., and Trehan N.,** (eds.), *Romani Politics in Contemporary Europe: Poverty, Ethnic Mobilization, and the Neoliberal Order*, Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 294.

bring to their higher education institutions the education, attitudes and values they received in their respective primary and secondary schools, and the universities build upon this. Just as importantly, if a disproportionate number of members of one particular group, be it girls, disabled children or children from religious minorities, can't complete compulsory primary education or have no access to secondary education, no reform at the higher educational level will be able to establish the desired inclusivity with regard to student body and curriculum. Therefore, it matters profoundly for higher education provision what happens at the lower levels.

Only addressing the immediate legal and/or 'technical' issues – vital as this obviously is – is not nearly enough: in order for education to reduce prejudices and become more inclusive, it is just as important for all groups of society to talk to each other, listen to each other's memories and experiences, acknowledge them, and make them part of a comprehensive and inclusive historical-cultural memory or consciousness. The curricula need to be based on such an inclusive public consciousness.

Bearing witness of one's experiences means transforming oneself from a mute and subjugated victim to a self-determined subject through one's own efforts. 'Healing through History' is a commendable and tested project<sup>31</sup> – but for it to work it needs the willingness, ability and openness on all sides involved to engage in such a process. The concerns of the marginalized groups are cogently articulated by a Romanian Rom: 'We are always supposed to listen to the majorities; we are never taken seriously. [...] All of us need to change, not only us, [...] We want help, we need help but this help should be on our terms and not focused as it is now on assimilation.'<sup>32</sup> An activist expressed it similarly: 'We are part of the current situation and will be part of the future. So, if you consider us as human

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, the Initiatives of Change conference 'Healing History – Overcoming Racism, Seeking Equity, Building Community' in Caux, Switzerland, which included a workshop on 'Listening to Unheard Voices: Roma in Kosovo', which I chaired, <http://www.caux.iofc.org/en/healing-history-0>; or projects such as 'Healing Through Remembering', <http://www.healingthroughremembering.org>; 'Healing Histories', <http://www.healinghistories.com>; or 'Healing the Wounds of History – Addressing the Roots of Violence', <http://www.healingwoundsofhistory.org> (all accessed 21 July 2014).

<sup>32</sup> Lilian Ignat Caransebes, Romania, September 2009, cited in Nicolae V., *We are the Roma! One Thousand Years of Discrimination*, London: Seagull Books, 2013, pp. 83-4.

beings, then you must put us in the game'.<sup>33</sup> Again, it is immediately obvious that this applies to all marginalized groups.

Some people might argue that countries currently not involved in the Bologna Process should only embark on these difficult and often painful changes and reforms once they have been given assurances that they will officially become part of the Process. This misunderstands the character of an inclusive (higher) education that values each and every member of society. It is not a 'price' that has to be paid to get access to benefits or opportunities: it is something that any society will want to implement because it agrees that it is the right way forward to develop and strengthen a stable, peaceful and democratic common future and resolving internal and inter-state conflicts.

Higher education has an important role to play in this development. However, instead of focusing solely on mechanisms and 'ticking the right boxes' in order to achieve recognition and become part of the Bologna Process, it is necessary to get the fundamentals in order first – or at least at the same time. Without solving internal problems where they exist, a resolution of the external issues will not be viable. All countries need to build a solid base from which to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher educational provisions and qualifications. Without such a base, the process would be sitting on very hollow foundations.

This is not to suggest that all is well within the European Higher Education Area and that all current EHEA member states have fully implemented in their educational reforms the European values that underpin the Bologna Process – far from it. What is suggested – and indeed, strongly advised – is that clear steps should be undertaken towards implementing these values. There are no doubt currently a number of EHEA member states that are sceptical of some or even all of these European values and resist their implementation in their higher educational provisions, and one might well argue that they should leave the EHEA. However, even if they do not leave the EHEA, they will inevitably find themselves increasingly marginalised as their standards and qualifications will be questioned, the mobility of their staff and students will become more confined, and they will

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<sup>33</sup> Nando Sigona in conversation with Mustafa A., and Salijevic G., 'Being Roma Activists in Post-Independence Kosovo.' In **Sigona N., and Trehan N.**, (eds.), *Romani Politics in Contemporary Europe: Poverty, Ethnic Mobilization and the Neoliberal Order*, Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 212.

not be able to benefit fully from the opportunities that the Bologna Process offers.

## **Conclusion**

Joining the European Higher Education Area is a protracted process, and even in the countries actively involved in the Bologna Process the interpretation of what exactly European values entail sometimes differs. However, what unites most countries of mainland Europe is a broad underlying agreement on the principles of democracy, rule of law and the inviolability of human rights.

The countries of the EU Eastern Partnership Region face particular challenges in this respect, as do all unrecognised or partially recognised countries, because for them the decision of whether or not to adopt the system of European values which underpins the EHEA is very much linked to the fundamental decision about how they want to see their societies develop after the collapse of the Soviet order. They also need to find ways of measuring progress. However, all too often the criteria are not set by non-partisan experts, but by government officials who use crude instruments such as policy documents and declarations, rather than real evidence of how far the values and principles are being implemented and embedded on the ground.

When the geopolitical struggle about the new demarcation of the zones of influence in the post-Soviet period turns into armed conflict, as in Georgia in 2008 or Ukraine in 2014, the principles of democracy, rule of law and the inviolability of human rights often become mere tools in this struggle. The assessment of how far these values and principles are being implemented tends to be even cruder as it is now linked to the question as to whether whoever evolves as the 'winner' in a particular country or region, be it in elections or otherwise, sees the future of his or her country with 'Europe' or with 'Russia'. In fact, more often than not this decision is the result of a strategic calculation as to what promises better prospects of preserving his or her grip on power, and less so a reflection of a true belief in or commitment to the value system of one side or the other.

Higher education is for the most part little more than a pawn in this struggle.