

## **ROADS AND ROADLESS TRACTS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION BY UNIVERSITY EDUCATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Leaving mono-cultural (Christian) Europe and the transition to multiculturalism which is the result of colonial and post-colonial policies of many European countries, creates new challenges in the field of integration. One of the possible instruments of integration is education. The study presents and evaluates the current university education integration process, and there are also presented some possible scenarios for further development of this form of integration. The process of European integration, supported by education, includes not only the content, the programs, or courses of study, but also the system of formation the future generations of the Europeans. Applying the education as an instrument of the European integration has been performed since the nineties of the twentieth century. Nowadays it is being run in accordance with the Treaty of Lisbon and many other normative acts of the EU, aiming to create a standardized educational space in Europe. However, this raises the fundamental question of the degree of social acceptance of such the processes and their effectiveness. For this purpose, the study analyzes the EU political normative acts, applying the statistical data and the elements of public opinion statements published in the leading European media.

### **KEYWORDS:**

*European integration, education, education recognition, standardizing of academic degrees and titles, Europeanization*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Nationalistic and communistic experiences in Europe of the first part of the twentieth century became the driving force of the European integration after the Second World War. It was treated as a new way of

creating the new European order, based on the peace. Brodecki even says about existing the European integration philosophy based on the ethical and praxeological values (Brodecki, 2009, p. 21). At the beginning of the integration process they started with ordering the most important matters associated with direct results of both world wars by implementing the justice rules of sharing the access to natural resources, namely to coal, steel (European Coal and Steel Community) and the atomic energy (European Atomic Energy Community). The economic and social development required creating the professional organisation ready to coordinate different types of activities within the area, where the European Economic Community was formed in 1957 (Konig, 2011, p. 105).

Over the time it has been realizing that the social, political and economic integration requires the dynamic scientific development, particularly education on every level (Breński, 2003, p. 101). The European politicians emphasized many times the importance of education for the European integration. In the technical civilization the education not only technical but also the humanistic one (together with social sciences) has the fundamental importance both for the development of the individual human being and for the regional, national and international community. Education is a way of the individual human being and the social group development, and it can be, and it is, the instrument of integration, independently on the language, colour of skin, religion, age, or sex (Sykora, 2000, p. 5).

The notion education itself can include in its meaning the process of formal (at public and non-public schools) and informal (self-education, courses, trainings) knowledge obtaining, but not only. It is accepted in literature that education means upbringing, in other words, gaining specific social behaviour efficiencies, and also shaping determined features and skills, particularly the professional ones. In contemporary education the sense is not only to provide appropriate amount of information, but also to teach a person suitable behaviour and the skills to be ready to apply the obtained knowledge in practice. For this purpose, there are implemented the European Qualification Frames almost everywhere in Europe, and also in Poland (Chmielecka, Marciniak, Kraśniewski, 2010, p. 7).

Education is run on different levels. For the purposes of this study I limit the analysis to the European academic educational policy. Implementation of the Bologna programme, students exchange programme,

particularly Erasmus Programme, introducing the European Qualification Frames, and diploma and qualifications recognition, are undoubtedly in favour of the European integration process, mainly in social dimension.

However, it is necessary to point out the fact that implementing the educational instruments brings a lot of dilemmas, and even objections, what consequently arises the question about assessment of legitimacy of chosen directions of academic education development in Europe. At the very beginning there should be assumed that the current academic educational activities are positive, however, their several elements require a correction, or even a change. Hence, the subject of this study is “the roads and roadless trucks of the European education”, what begins a lively discussion on the assessment of current achievements within this area (Breński, 2011, p. 542).

## **2. LEGAL FRAMES OF ACADEMIC EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

For a long time education has been the domain of national regulations and the element of the Member States policy. At the beginning of the seventies the Community organs started to take an interest in education as one of the instruments of the European integration. The first document, in which they paid attention to the need of incorporating the education into the community policies, including the integration policy, Stuttgart Solemn Declaration on European Union of 1983 (Kijanka, 2009, p. 80n). In that document the decision was taken to dynamise the integration processes among others, by education, particularly the vocational one. The additional purpose of that undertaking was implementing the mechanisms of fighting with unemployment of youth. General education, in particular the humanistic one, was left aside. In the declaration mentioned above, there was assumed that the real shape of the vocational education development depends on the national governments (Jansen, 1995, p. 188).

However, the declaration resolutions had the accidental character. The first legal regulations about it were included in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, where they introduced the new contents in art. 126, 127, and 128 in chapter 3 of the Treaty on European Community (further: TEC). In article 126 it is stated that the Community is obliged to keep high standards of education, to develop the cooperation among the countries in this field, and in particular, to standardize the quality of the content of

education and the organisation of educational systems. These goal should be achieved by:

- The development of the European dimension in education, particularly by education, teaching and popularizing the Member States languages;
- Providing in students' and teachers' mobility, among others by encouraging to recognize the academic diplomas and periods of studies;
- Promoting the cooperation among the educational institutions;
- Developing and sharing the information and experiences on common issues for the Member States educational systems;
- Favoring the exchange development of youth and social- educational trainers;
- Supporting the distance learning development.

In art. 127 in turn, there is implemented, the need to make the syllabuses vocational, also at universities, and to prepare the young people to change their qualifications in their lives, even several times. An important element of contemporary new education is to initiate the educational cooperation between the educational institutions and corporations. Additionally, it is emphasized to develop and share the information and experiences on common issues for the Member States educational systems.

The solutions mentioned above were summarized and elaborated in the Lisbon treaty of 2007. The political assumptions of the Lisbon treaty were recorded in the fundamental treaty document, i.e. in art.163 and 164 TEC, and now in art.179 and 180 in the consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union Functioning (further: TFEU), education is closely linked with scientific research and economy requirements. In art. 180 there is decided that to achieve the Union purposes, there are several assignments undertaken, which are the implementation of the activities entered by the Member States:

- a) Making the research, technological and demonstrative programmes, together with promoting the cooperation with and among corporations, research centers and universities;
- b) Supporting the cooperation in the field of Union research, technological development and demonstration with the third countries and international organizations;
- c) Popularizing and optimizing the activity results in the field of Union research, the technological development and demonstration;
- d) Supporting the education and the researchers' mobility in Union.

This is particularly important and worth to notice that the international research are being promoted, transferring the scientific thought to academic syllabuses, and increasing the researchers' mobility. Realization of the assumed purposes in art. 180 TFEU should be done by the frame programme defined in art. 182–186 TFEU. The idea is to approach the researchers and corporations, and commercialization of the research. The activities have to have their real influence on the European academic syllabuses.

The current legal solutions tend to have proper direction. Theoretical education, separate from the social and technological development and political needs is being left. There should be positively evaluated the frame programme implementation, without which it would be impossible to engage the theoretical researchers into the practical and implementations activities. However, there can be some doubts of the level of technical education programmes at universities with decreasing the role of social and humanistic sciences. Is there enough humanistic subjects at technical studies to educate the engineers sensitive towards humanitarian aspects of human lives? There can be mentioned here numerous cases of dehumanization of technical sciences. Let us imagine that somewhere in the USA in the military base there is an engineer responsible for the unmanned flights of military dronnns, which are directed to destroy the enemy's destinations in Afghanistan. As a result of the mistaken data, the target was defined improperly, and a village was ruined including killing the innocent people. After completing the assignment the operator comes back home and enjoys the family life. What are the categories in which we should evaluate that event, in particular the activities of an engineer, or an operator of the action? During the Second World War there was the war criminal notion, socially univocal and historically negatively evaluated. The development of science caused to separate the reason (offender) from the result (victim) so far, that it is difficult to talk about the activity and responsibility of the individual person in moral categories also in case of killing innocent strangers. This analyzed case is the example of dehumanization of technology and war operations. Therefore, this is necessary to make scientific discussions and reflections about humanization of technical sciences (Sitek, 2006, p. 118–120).

### 3. BOLOGNA PROCESS-STANDARDIZATION OF EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The separation of science in Europe for many centuries resulted in radically differentiated academic programmes at universities within the most areas of education. The most similar were maths and physics sciences, and a little bit less, the technical ones. In case of technical sciences the closer academic programs were in accordance with the standardized technical norms in the world, however, on the other hand, the political division into the so called West and East, had its influence on differentiation of educational purposes. On the west they have had innovations and narrow specializations at least since the sixties of the twentieth century, whereas in the countries of the socialistic block, they emphasized the role of the heavy industry development, mainly for the needs of military industry. Consequently, the social and humanitarian sciences were developed in particular countries separately from the international community, very often in association with the political doctrine (Zawisza, 2012, p. 239).

The European integration intensification in the eighties required also the new activities within the education at universities. Those activities were built on the basis of normative acts undertaken earlier by the Council of Europe and UN agenda of UNESCO. The documents are:

- The European Convention on diplomas equivalency giving the right to be acknowledged at universities (1953, ETN No.15) and the Protocol (1964, ETS No.49);
- The European Convention on the equivalency of the university studies periods (1956, ETS No.21);
- The European Convention on the university qualifications academic acknowledgement (1959, ETS No. 32);
- The Convention on studies, higher education diplomas, and scientific grades acknowledgement in the countries of the European Region (1979);
- The European Convention on general equivalency of the university studies (1990, ETS No.138);

The most significant community undertaking within this field is the programme initiated by 29 ministers responsible for the higher educational system on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1999, in other words the Bologna process. The goal of that document was to create the European Higher Education Area (further: EHEA). That process was further discussed, developed and corrected on the successive ministry meetings adequate to the higher education matters. Such the meetings took place in Prague (2001), Berlin

(2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007), Leuven-Louvain-La-Nuevo (2009), Budapest and Vienna (2010) (Kraśniewski, 2006, p. 15).

The aim of creating EHEA was to prepare the conditions to citizens' mobility, adjusting the educational system to the needs of labour market, and particularly to improve the "employment", to make the system of higher education in Europe more attractive and competitive, in accordance with the contribution of this geographical region to the development of civilization (Kraśniewski, 2009, p. 7). In Bologna declaration, apart from the ideological part, i.e. integrative one, there are also predicted numerous practical instruments, which are implementing:

- Undergraduate and graduate studies (Bachelor's and MA degree studies),
- ECTS credits to evaluate students' achievements during the semesters, academic years, and the whole studies,
- The mobility of students, scientific workers, and even the administrative workers,
- The cooperation on the European level within the studies quality improvement,
- Promoting the European values at every educational levels, in a form of separate subjects or including them into the existing education programmes,
- The system of legible and comparable grades and diplomas.

During the Prague conference the idea of life long lasting education was postulated, then, in Berlin, there was discussed the idea of widening the study structure and adding the doctoral studies as the third-cycle studies. During the following meetings there was decided the cancellation of accessibility to studies barriers, particularly the financial barriers, implementation of the procedures to grant visas and work permissions also for students from the third countries, in the end, they discussed the development of doctoral studies, not only for the needs of higher education, but also for the industrial needs, banking sector, and public administration (Kraśniewski, 2009, pp. 9–10). The purpose of this is to improve the qualifications of managerial workers.

Establishing EHEA brought significant values in different fields, such as: development of science, growth of the level of foreign languages knowledge, acceptance and learning about other cultures within the young generation, and first of all the students' mobility growth. Particularly this element is unusually significant for the European integration. The Erasmus Programme statistical data proves the importance of students' mobility

for the European integration. The number of students' holidays in Europe in the year 1987–1988 was 3,244, whereas in 2011–2012 it was 252,827. In that year there were 15,315 Polish students who went out. Poland is also the attractive country for foreigners. During the 2011–2012 we had 8,972 students who came to Poland (Członkowska-Naumiuk, Warszawa, 2013).

The Bologna process had its great positive influence on the European integration within the field of academic education; however, it is difficult not to notice the widely discussed inadequacies and mistakes. Firstly, there should be indicated the transformation of University studies from exclusive to mass studies, what resulted in decreasing the education level. This conflict between the quality of education and the right of every person to gain the education was arbitrated for the favour of that second value. The following fault is implementation of the first and second-cycle studies at all the study subjects. The idea of such the activity was enabling the students to gain qualifications in two areas during the studies. However, not always that was true in practice. Changing the study subject does not guarantee obtaining the appropriate professional qualifications, e.g. after Bachelor's degree of European studies, it may appear impracticable to continue MA engineering studies within constructing the plans.

Moreover, in case of some studies, in majority of the European countries, it is not practically possible to perform the professional work after Bachelor's degree studies, e.g. after medicine, law, psychology, theology. Hence, in several countries, it is noticeable, the return to normal studies at these subjects, e.g. in Spain and Italy. In turn, in Poland we reserved the right to have five-year studies at several subjects. However, the biggest wave of criticism is directed into practical approach to studies, with the disadvantage for humanistic and social subjects of studies, which are particularly important for the European culture.

#### **4. DIPLOMA RECOGNITION (ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL DEGREES AND TITLES) AS THE INTEGRATION ELEMENT**

One of the European Union purposes is establishing the common market also by standardizing the academic educational programmes and implementation of the diploma, academic degrees and titles recognition. There is quite wide-ranging differentiation within this area in Europe. This is the result of different university education systems evolution stories in Europe and formal requirements for performing the particular



profession. There is quite serious problem for the European legislator to cope with the national tradition barrier, hence, this is noticeable the quite significant differentiation of diploma recognition within the university and vocational activities. The Member States still have their current regulations, however with the tendency to acknowledge the academic education. The organ having the authority to decide about the adequacy and competences of academic education for the carrier is the council of university basic organizational unit or rector, as Polish legislator established it. If we mean the professional qualifications recognition, the exceptions are here the regulated professions, where Member States have the right to introduce the particular requirements, typical for the given country. In such the case obtaining the vocational qualifications abroad is not enough (Sitek, 1999, p. 59).

The basic document about education recognition is the Convention on qualifications recognition connected with obtaining the academic education in the European Region, concluded in Lisbon on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1997. That convention opened the qualifications recognition enabling the individual Union citizen the access to university studies in optional country, and the possibility to be employed after graduating the university. That objective convention includes each degree, diploma, or other certificate issued by competent authorities, acknowledging successful graduation of studies on the given studies specialization. Moreover, the convention includes the qualifications providing the access to academic studies, what means each diploma or other certificate issued by competent authorities, acknowledging the graduation of educational programme and providing the chance to apply for the admission to university studies. On the basis of the Lisbon Convention you can apply to have the part of your studies abroad acknowledged (chapter V), the effect of which is Erasmus Programme (Dobrzańska, 2009, p. 17). However, the most important is the university qualifications and diploma recognition (chapter VI), and the possibility to introduce the analogical education, qualifications, and diploma acknowledgement in the Member States (academic and vocational degrees and titles) for emigrants and the people from the third countries (chapter VII).

The aim of the convention is formal acknowledgement by the competent authorities, the qualifications obtained abroad in connection with starting the education or professional work.

Implementing the rule of acknowledgement is not equivalent with resigning from any educational barriers. The Lisbon Convention makers

assumed the possibility to evaluate the qualifications by competent organs of the Member States (art. III-1). The evaluation of obtained qualifications should have comparative character, not the discriminative one, because of egzogenic factors (race, colour of skin, sex, nationality, or religion). The criteria of acknowledgement should be formulated in the clear way and made public (art. III-3). The decisions made by organs about qualifications, diploma, or degrees recognition, should be undertaken within reasonable time, that means to respect the administrative periods binding in the given country (art. III-5).

Standardizing the educational programmes, introducing the acknowledgement of qualifications, diploma, and academic degrees is undoubtedly the great event for the European Union and the great progress in the process of development and European integration improvement. Already two generations of young people had the chance to be educated within the European educational area on the basis of similar academic programmes. It resulted in decreasing the unemployment among the young generation by mobility, both to study and work. It can be presumed that these two generations of contemporary forty years old and twenty years old, are not interested in devastating the current political and social order in Europe, thanks to the provided professional and academic universal qualifications (Sitek, 2007, p. 9–10).

Despite of visible successes of the European standardization of the university educational market, it would be difficult not to notice that some disadvantages exist. Numerous European university councils observe the decrease of the level of education, and at the same time the decrease of students' qualifications, and consequently the studies graduates, in relation with the university mass education. The free market mechanisms, or implementing the European Qualification Frames are not ready to prevent the decrease of educational level, and commercialization of academic research. Furthermore, numerous countries still apply different barriers to counteract uncontrolled flow of young people, to protect their labour markets. This is visible in numerous populist political slogans in Belgium, Holland, and even in Great Britain.

## 5. SUMMARY

Implementing the European University Education Space in the European Union is a gleaning of previous activities undertaken by the Council of Europe and UNESCO. The basic importance for university education

recognition, and particularly the professional and scientific qualifications and degrees is the Lisbon Convention of 1997. On the basis of this normative act, which constitutes the soft law, it was implemented the possibility to abolish the current barriers dividing the higher education in Europe. The existing barriers were the effect of historical development of educational systems in respective countries, separated from the others. Consequently, nowadays there is the tendency to return to the mediaeval ideas of teaching students in the whole Europe on the basis of similar educational programmes at particular studies, however, in connection with the industry needs and research results commercialization. However, the most significant is the fact that the European Higher Education Space significantly contributed to the intensification of the integration processes by students' mobility, scientists, administrative staff, by implementing the recognition of qualifications, diplomas, degrees and academic and vocational titles. These are the roads of new Europe tending to the future without military and social conflicts.

The undoubted successes of the European Higher Education Space have to be further developed and corrected because of the current experiences. This is necessary in view of the argumentation of the European integration opponents. Firstly, there should be indicated the necessity of facultative applying the Bologna process. The experience indicated, that it is impossible to run education on two levels at every studies specialization, e.g. at law, medicine, psychology, history, theology. Hence, some of the countries chose the direction to leave the Bologna process, and it is wrong (Erasmus, 2012, p. 41).

Another problem, which requires correction, is the technology issue, science and education commercialization, with harm of humanistic and social sciences. These sciences have strong tradition in Europe and the scientists' representation, hence the significant academic opposition appears. Therefore, this is necessary to introduce the rules of balanced development and implementing the reforms within particular areas of science and education.

In the end, the corrections require also shaping the consciousness of students and courses participants in a spirit of European values, European integration, but saving local traditions. The policy to remove the existing cultural differences, particularly in academic programmes at humanistic specializations has to make divisions, and even the aversion towards the European integration, e.g. implementing to the programmes content the information from gender ideology. The example of coexistence between

European and local culture is Bavaria in Germany, where each Bavarian feels both, the European and Bavarian.

The indicated roadless tracks of European integration in the field of university education are quite easy, they can contribute to destroy the heritage of over 50 years integration, without which Europe cannot continue to exist.

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