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Keynote Address

European universities on the move

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The Bologna process has brought about a sea change to European education, if only because students have been thrust at the centre of the reform process. In forcing institutions to rethink their curricula and to do so within a frame of reference that is wider than their national boundaries, it has encouraged institutions across Europe to rethink whether education is about the teacher or the learner and to place students at the centre of teaching and learning.

The Bologna process started with a rather limited aspiration to implement a common degree structure in Europe but, as always in the field of education, once we start pulling on one thread it is the whole fabric that is affected. Thus, every two years, new priorities have been added, e.g., to ensure the mobility of students across Europe and the employability of graduates. New instruments were or are in the process of being implemented such as qualifications frameworks and the diploma supplement. In turn, these instruments are making it essential to define learning outcomes and to measure them.

Therefore, the Bologna process is leading to significant changes in the way students are supported and taught in institutions. There is suddenly a new awareness that student success can no longer be considered as automatic and that – especially first-year students – need to be integrated in institutions in order to ensure their engagement and hence their learning.

In parallel to these important developments, there are also new initiatives in the area of research seeking to make Europe more competitive and more attractive to European researchers.

The presentation will address all these changes and their impact on universities, while taking into account wider international trends affecting higher education.