

16. PREDICTING THE IMPLICATIONS OF ERASMUS PROGRAMME AND BOLOGNA PROCESS ON DUTCH HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Free movement of workers, as part of the European integration, willy-nilly challenges the Community to address the provisions on education. In fact, however, education had not been referred in the EC (European Community) Treaty. The reference made was only on 'vocational training', which was then stipulated in the Article 218. The change came after the amendments made by the TEU (Treaty on European Union).

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Through the amendments, Article 3(p) and Article 126 of the EC (European Community) Treaty now become Article 3(p) and 149, which makes a specific reference to the development of education. This amendment has brought the question of education within the Community's competence. Even though the provisions on education have been somewhat overdue to be adopted, but certain aspects of education had been already covered by the Community's competence. Legislation, with the approval of the ECJ (European Council of Justice), has been adopted to establish schemes in the areas of vocational training, foreign languages, educational exchange, and educational mobility within the Community. Several programmes such as Erasmus, Commett, Petra, Lingua and Tempus since then had been carried out, and a European Training Foundation had been set up. There have been action programmes in the areas of education like Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci as well.

In the areas of higher education, the Council Decision No. 87/327/EEC of 15 June 1987 introduced the Erasmus programme and provided the guidelines for the actions. Since then the Erasmus evidently has shown good progress and very welcomed by the participating countries

and eventually has become the higher education element of Socrates I and Socrates II action programmes.

Parallel to the Erasmus, in 1999 European ministers in charge of higher education from 29 countries signed a declaration in Bologna, Italy, which was designed to introduce a European higher education area. It is known as the Bologna Declaration and the endeavours and stages to attain its objectives are called the Bologna process.

In this essay we—to some respect—strive to scrutinise the development of higher education within the European Union (henceforth EU) structure. The first focus is on 2 courageous endeavours that have been already yielding good results to the participating countries: (1) Erasmus programme; and (2) the Bologna declaration and process. The second focus is on the implications of both programme and process on the Netherlands side.

First, in the discussion, a particular attention is given to Socrates I (1995-1999) and Socrates II (2000-2006) action programmes as when Erasmus ceased functioning as an independent programme in 1995, since then it has been modified and put under the Socrates. Additionally, discussion 105 on Socrates cannot be left out when we wish to talk about the development of education within the EU because it is the first overall programme in the areas of education at the Community level. Then the discussion is furthered to the dynamics of higher education development carried out through Erasmus programme. It is emphasised on the progress of the programme since its introduction in 1987 until the recent accessible information. Thirdly, attention is provided to the Bologna declaration and the subsequent development of the process. Finally, we hypothesise some implications the programme and process may impact on the Dutch higher education and system.

The data and statistics used in this article are collected from relevant sources including books, reports, the on-line Official Journal of the European Union and other websites, newspapers, relevant agency, in this case is the Nuffic (Netherlands organisation for international cooperation in higher education), etc.

Socrates Action Programme

Legally, Socrates is based on Articles 149 and 150 of the TEU (formerly Articles 126 and 127 of the EC Treaty). Article 149 stipulates that the Community “shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States” through a range of actions, such as promoting mobility, exchanges of information or the teaching of the languages of the European Union. The Treaty also emphasises a firm commitment to promote life-long learning for all the Union’s citizens.

The Community supports as well as supplements the actions taken by the Member States in the field of education while respecting their responsibility for the content of teaching and the organisation of national education system, and their cultural and linguistics diversity. In this context, the Community plays a complementary role that is to supplement a European dimension to education, to help to develop quality education and to encourage life-long learning. The Socrates programme has functioned as the main instrument to materialise this goal.

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The adoption of the Socrates I by Decision No. 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (14 March 1995), which subsequently amended by Decision No. 576/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (23 February 1998) marked the beginning of, for the first time at the Community level, the implementation of an overall programme in the area of education. The first phase Socrates programme was based on an integrated framework of actions and activities relating to all levels of education. Article 1 of the Decision stated: “This programme is intended to contribute to the development of quality education and training and the creation of an open European area for cooperation in education.”

Socrates I started in 1995 and ended in 1999. Within 1995 and 1997 the participating countries included the 15 Member States of the EU, 3 countries of the European Free Trade Area (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway). However, from 1997 and 1998 onwards it has been also available to the nationals and institutions of several countries, which have applied to be members of the EU (Czech Republic, Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Roma-

nia and Slovakia). Bulgaria, Slovenia and 3 Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) have been accepted into the programme since 1999.

Now based on the considerations 11 and 12 of the Decision No. 253/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (24 January 2000), the number of participating countries in Socrates II is enlarged beyond the participating countries of Socrates I through the accession of Malta and Turkey. For Turkey, the year 2001 will be a preparatory year. In addition, Socrates II is being implemented over the period between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2006.

When Socrates I ended on 31 December 1999 and the formal decision of the European Parliament and the Council establishing Socrates II was not taken until 24 January 2000, there was a need to implement Socrates II into 2 stages, so that the continuity of the programme could be preserved.

Stage 1—In the year 2000 the Actions of the programme were carried out along similar tracks to Socrates I. Nevertheless, a number of changes have been introduced in accordance with the Socrates II decision. They concerned both the thematic orientation of certain actions and some of the administrative procedures. A full annual budget was also available for the programme in the year 2000. Generally speaking, all types of activity previously eligible for support within Socrates I, were eligible for support in the year 2000.

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Stage 2—The decision on Socrates II also brings about a number of more substantial changes to the programme, compared to Socrates I. The introduction of those changes requires a longer preparation period, in order to ensure that all potential participants are informed and that the necessary administrative structures are set in place at the Community level and in the Member States. The implementation of Socrates II takes effect in the year 2001.

Socrates I covered 8 actions: (1) Erasmus (Higher Education); (2) Comenius (School Education); (3) Lingua (Promoting Language Learning); (4) Open and Distance Learning; (5) Adult Education; (6) Exchange Information and Experience on Education; (7) Systems and Policy; and (8) Complementary Measures. On the other hand, based on Article 3 of the Decision No. 253/2000/EC and the operational content and application

procedures which are described in the Annex, there are 8 separate actions included into Socrates II: (1) Comenius (School Education); (2) Erasmus (Higher Education); (3) Grundtvig (Adult Education and Other Education Pathways); (4) Lingua (Teaching and Learning of Languages); (5) Minerva (Open and Distance Learning, Information and Communication Technologies in the Field of Education); (6) Observation and Innovation; (7) Joint Actions; and (8) Accompanying Measures.

In terms of financial support, the total budget of the 5-year term Socrates I (1995-1999) was € 933 million, € 920 million of which was allocated for the operational expenditure. The largest allocation of the budget was for Erasmus programme (totally € 525,454,206). As comparison, the financial framework for the 7-year term Socrates II (2000-2006) has been set at € 1,850 million, € 950 million of which is allocated for Erasmus, where € 750 million is made available for student grants. Additional funds are given in each country by public authorities, universities, and other organisations.

The dynamics of Erasmus Programme

A European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students called Erasmus had been adopted through the Council Decision No. 87/327/EEC of 15 June 1987. It means that the Erasmus programme has already existed even before the adoption of Socrates I in 1995.

The aims of the programme had been supporting, promoting and stimulating cooperation between European universities towards developing joint curricula, exchanging staff and students, and organising joint intensive short courses. The Community, through the Erasmus programme, financially assisted European universities in order to establish Inter-University Cooperation Programmes (ICPs). Besides providing financial assistance to the universities, the Erasmus programme also provided grants to students who wanted to fulfil part of the requirements to obtain their degree in a University in another Member State of the EC.

From 1995 and onwards, Erasmus ceased as an independent programme but has continued, in modified form, as the higher education component of the Socrates action programme.

According to Article 3 of the Decision No. 253/2000/EC and the Annex, Erasmus programme is one of the 8 aforementioned actions covered by Socrates II. This programme sets the endeavours to enhance the quality and reinforce the European dimension of higher education, to encourage transnational cooperation between universities, to promote European mobility in higher education sector and to improve transparency and academic recognition of studies and qualifications throughout the Community.

Eligible universities that wish to participate in the programme must conclude 'institutional contracts' with the Commission covering all the approved Erasmus activities. Those contracts will normally terminate in three years and are renewable.

In its implementation, this programme is divided into 3 actions namely European interuniversity cooperation, mobility of students and university teachers, and thematic networks. The following description is stipulated in the Annex of Decision No. 253/2000/EC as such:

Action 2.1: European interuniversity cooperation

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1. The Community supports interuniversity cooperation activities including the development of innovative projects, carried out by universities in conjunction with partners in other Member States, with the participation, where appropriate, of other players involved in education, as described in Article 4 of the Decision.
2. Community financial assistance may be awarded for the following:
 - (a) the organisation of mobility of students and university teachers;
 - (b) joint development and implementation of curricula, modules, intensive courses or other educational activities, including multidisciplinary activities and the teaching of subjects in other languages;
 - (c) consolidation, extension and further development of the European credit transfer system (ECTS), which is designed to facilitate academic recognition in other Member States.

Action 2.2: Mobility of students and university teachers

1. The Community supports transnational mobility activities concerning:
 - (a) students, in accordance with point 2;
 - (b) university teachers, for the purpose of carrying out teaching assignments likely to enhance the European dimension or extend the range of courses offered by the universities concerned.
2. Students who, after completing at least their first year of studies, spend three to 12 months in another Member State within the framework of this Action, will be considered 'Erasmus students', regardless whether they have been awarded financial support in accordance with point 3. Such periods are fully recognised under the interuniversity agreements forming part of the institutional contracts and may include integrated in-company placements where appropriate. The host universities will not charge tuition fees to Erasmus students. Students with special needs will be given particular attention.
3. Community financial assistance may be awarded for:
 - the mobility of students. The Member States may, in awarding Community grants, take appropriate account of the economic situation of applicants. As the Community's contribution covers only part of the cost of students' mobility, Member States are invited to help provide the necessary funds. In this connection, grants or loans available to students in the Member State of origin shall continue to be paid during the period of study in a host Member State;
 - the mobility of university teachers;
 - preparatory measures, in accordance with Section IV B, point 4.

Action 2.3: Thematic networks

The Community promotes the development and consolidation of thematic networks, each enabling a large grouping of universities to cooperate on topics relating to one or more disciplines or on other matters of mutual interest in order to disseminate innovation, facilitate the spread of good practice, encourage discussion of qualitative and innovative aspects of

higher education, improve teaching methods and stimulate the development of joint programmes and specialised courses. The involvement of representatives of learned societies, professional associations and socio-economic circles is to be encouraged. Special attention will be paid to the dissemination of results.

From 1987/1988 until 1999/2000 there have been about 750,000 university students have spent a period abroad under Erasmus and more than 1,800 European universities and higher education institutions have been participating. It means nearly all European universities and higher education institutions are already involved.

It is obvious that there are 2 categories of people who can take the advantage from Erasmus activities: students and university teachers.

For the students, Erasmus provides the opportunity to study for a period of 3-12 months at a university or higher education institution in another participating country. The time spent studying in the other country is fully recognised in the home institution due to the ECTS system, which facilitates academic recognition of periods of study in partner institutions. This requires an advance agreement between the institutions concerned before a person can benefit from the Erasmus scheme.

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Students can apply for European grants, which are intended to help to cover the cost of travelling and the difference in cost of living. They are also eligible to obtain financial assistance from the Commission for language tuition prior to their departure to, or upon their arrival at a foreign institution.

For the teachers, there are several opportunities open to them, such as:

- Teacher exchanges—The European Commission provides assistance to teachers giving courses, usually short courses, as part of the official curriculum of a partner university in another European country.
- Joint preparation of courses—This joint preparation must consist of at least three institutions (of different countries) pooling their resources to develop a programme of study, a module, a curriculum or a master's programme. This can be done in all academic subject areas.

- Intensive programmes—Community financial support can be made available to universities organising intensive courses (e.g. as part of summer university programmes), especially when they have European dimension and perspective.
- Thematic networks—University departments or faculties, research centres or professional associations can establish a European network around a subject area or a specific topic as a platform for analysis and discussion. The condition to obtain the Commission support for these thematic networks is that all the participating countries must be represented.

Since its inception in 1996 through 2000, the Thematic Network Projects covered or are covering the following subject areas: Medical Sciences, Management Sciences, Dental Education, University Management, Pharmacology, Computing Humanities, Veterinary Science, Teacher Education, Medical Physics, Continuing Education, Adapted Physical Activity, Law, Physics, Political Sciences, Chemistry, Tourism and Leisure, Biology, Sport Sciences, Biotechnology, Social Sciences, Food Studies, Children Identity and Citizenship, Agricultural Sciences, Women's Studies, Environmental Sciences, Ethics, Environment/Water, Philosophy, Engineering Education, Speech Communication Sciences, Civil Engineering, Communication Sciences and Journalism, Telematics Sciences, Languages, Literature, Information Technology in Education, Arts, Planning (Urban and Regional), Archaeology, Occupational Therapy, Humanitarian Development Studies, and Gerontechnology Education.

The Bologna Process

Serious steps have been taken to search for a common European solution to common European problems such as the Bologna Magna Charta Universitatum (1988), which stressed that the independence and autonomy of universities would ensure the adaptability of higher education and research system to the need of changing demands in the society and for the advancement of scientific knowledge. Several years after that came the Sorbonne Declaration (1998), which emphasised the important roles of

universities in developing a European cultural dimension. Next to Sorbonne Declaration was the signing of the Bologna Declaration (19 June 1999) by 29 European ministers in charge of higher education which has been a key document to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. The signatory countries will undertake to attain the Declaration's objectives and uphold the commitment to engage in coordinating their policies.

The Bologna Declaration was a commitment freely taken by each signatory country to reform its educational system(s) in order to establish overall convergence at European level. Even though it seems to be voluntarily, but any pressure individual country or higher education institutions may feel from the Bologna process reflects the ignorance of that country or institution to respond the demands of rapid transformation in the society and the scientific knowledge.

Towards more concrete common actions in establishing the EHEA a meeting of European ministers in charge of higher education took place in Prague, 19 May 2001. The Prague Communiqué, which was signed by 32 representatives of the signatory countries, contains further actions that should be taken in order to materialise the 6 objectives of the Bologna process: (1) adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees; (2) adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles; (3) establishment of a system of credit; (4) promotion of mobility; (5) promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance, and (6) promotion of the European dimensions in higher education. In Prague, the ministers also further emphasised three additional points: (1) life-long learning; (2) higher education institutions and students; (3) promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area.

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Implications of Erasmus Programme

The Netherlands is one of among the major EU member states that has actively involved in the Erasmus programme. In terms of the number of students both foreign studying in the Netherlands and outgoing Dutch nationals studying in other participating countries under the Erasmus, the Netherlands in 2 calendar years (1998/1999 and 1999/2000), has been the

big six among the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Spain and Italy. The whole budget for Erasmus programme that the Netherlands obtained in 1999/2000 was € 3,781,322 (NLG 8,332,948).

Despite the number of Erasmus students from other participating countries in the Netherlands and outgoing Dutch students enrolled at foreign universities and institutions tends to fluctuate, nevertheless, in the last 2 calendar years it shows an increase. In 1998/1999 there were 5,752 foreign students studying in the Netherlands and 4,332 outgoing Dutch students studying abroad under Erasmus programme. In 1999/2000 they became 5,896 and 4,418.

Additionally, the number of the outgoing Dutch university teachers participated in the Erasmus programme in 1999 calendar year was 558. According to Nuffic, however, the number for 1999/2000 was 582.

The number of participating institutions in Erasmus action (1999/2000) from the Netherlands side was 63. There were 8 Dutch institutions involved in the coordination of the CDA (development of advance curricula) and 42 participated in the CDA, 5 institutions involved in the coordination of the CDI (development of initial and intermediate curricula) and 22 participated in the CDI, 8 institutions involved in the coordination of the EM (European modules) and 44 participated in the EM, 2 institutions involved in the coordination of the ILC (integrated language courses) and 5 participated in the ILC, and 41 have already adopted the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System).

Since Erasmus programme involves people mobility (university students and teachers) it remains keeping the participating parties busy. To the Netherlands side it creates some implications, both in terms of advantage and obstacle. Among the positive implications to the country is that the Netherlands, as one of the Community founders, can be regarded has actively involved in serious steps toward the integration of Europe by way of cooperating in higher education. It is a case of a good image which reflects the enthusiasm of the Netherlands to join effort in order to attain certain objectives of the EU on mobility of students and teachers as well as promoting education and cultural and linguistics diversities among the member states in a broad sense. The second implication is that the Neth-

erlands, in order to be more attractive to the ingoing Erasmus students, would be encouraged to enhance and improve its quality education. One of indicators for this need is that its neighbours like the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, and Denmark have surpassed the long reputation of the Netherlands as the most highly educated nation in Europe. In short, the Netherlands, like that of expected by other participating countries, has been gaining many benefits from this exchange programme.

In terms of obstacles there some implications brought about by the Erasmus, some of which can mainly be classified into two categories: the mobility obstacles and the administrative obstacles. The first ones have to do with visa, residence permits, housing, insurance, social security, different national academic years, etc. The second ones have to do with inflexible regulations, rules, laws, bureaucracy, long-term applications, contracts, paper works, and so forth.

Implications of the Bologna Process

The common goal of the Bologna process in general is to create a European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to make European higher education more competitive in the international level. Despite the Bologna process is not a reform imposed upon national government or higher education institution and the deadline has been set up by 2010, the Netherlands had decided their own deadline: 2003. Even the Parliament pushed the minister in charge of higher education to enlighten the meaning of integration of the Bologna Declaration into the Dutch system.

Once Minister of Education, L. Hermans, expressed his opinion on the Bologna process that Dutch universities do not need to worry about competition with foreign counterparts. However, he emphasised that there is no need for the universities in the future to function like real business companies. To further he said, "Het staat vast dat we die hervorming gaan invoeren. Dan kun je daar beter snel mee zijn, want iedere afgestudeerde die van vóór de verandering is, heeft straks minder kansen. Gisteren is vandaag al begonnen, hoor." His statement shows he was adamant that the Netherlands must go on with the Bologna process.

To this country, among the 6 objectives to be attained in the Bologna process, perhaps the introduction of undergraduate and postgraduate levels (two-cycle system) in all countries would be a somewhat tough obstacle. It implies that Dutch university programmes have to be divided into two: one is a broaden, multidisciplinary undergraduate phase or bachelor phase in three years, and then followed by a specialist graduate phase or master phase in one year (usually two years for bèta programmes), which can be also formulated as '3+1 programme'. Student who follows the complete university programme may use "Master" title. The government would separately fund both phases. On the other hand, programmes in higher professional education (*hogescholen*) would only lead to the titles of bachelor.

Reaction and response towards the implementation of Bologna process in the field have been varied; some show opposition, and other show support. Opposition, for example, was voiced by Prof. Dr. D. Bosscher, the Rector Magnificus of the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. Bosscher, who is also the Chairman of Rectorcollege said, "Minister Hermans heeft zoveel randvoorwaarden geformuleerd, dat we ons afvragen of we nog langer aan moeten meewerken." According to Bosscher the one specialist year in the universities would not enough to train the students to the expected level of mastery and it could create an image that Dutch universities look no longer competitive in Europe as they have been. The universities also worried that by the introduction of the 3 + 1 formula, the students who already obtained their 3-year bachelor diplomas would leave the university earlier without completing their specialist Master phase.

The mood of the universities, however, has been quite in favour of the process compared to that of the last academic year. Rector Magnificus F. van der Duyn Schouten from the Catholic University of Brabant thought that the universities through master programme would be more flexible to catch up with the development of science and community. The Collegevoorzitter of Leiden University, Loek Vredevoogd, expressed his optimism and considered the introduction of the new system as an important stimulant to educational reforms. The Erasmus University of Rotterdam

viewed the introduction of the two-cycle Anglo-Saxon system as a strong stimulant for internationalisation of Dutch higher education.

Conclusion

The provisions on education seem to have been slowly brought to the European Community and then to the European Union competence. Specific reference to education made, which had been stated in Article 218 of the EEC (Establishing of European Community) Treaty, was only on 'vocational training.' The change came after the amendments made by the TEU (Treaty on European Union).

Generally speaking, Socrates action programmes have functioned as a right and important umbrella to enable the progress of the overall levels of education within the EU structure.

In the realm of higher education within the EU structure, there are two actions that have played very important roles. They are Erasmus programme and the Bologna process. Even though it is likely hard to prove a direct link between Erasmus programme and the Bologna process, but they are closely related and supporting to each other. For example, four of the six objectives of the Bologna process have been introduced under the Erasmus, namely promoting mobility, extending the ECTS, adopting the diploma supplement, cooperation in the area of quality assurance. 117

They also reflect a firm common resolve of the signatory countries to further and smooth the path that eventually leading towards an enlarged and more integrated EU. The inclusion of the non-EU/EFTA countries which are prospective to be new members of the EU signs this. It can be said that their experience participating in the programme and process in certain aspects would be a worthwhile learning process as well as making gradual adaptation and necessary adjustments to the EU system before their accession into the EU finally approved.

From the policy-making and legislation point of view, Erasmus programme has been product of the European Parliament and of the Council's decisions. Since in the EU structure a decision should be binding in its entirety upon those to whom it is addressed, the Erasmus programme in the Netherlands has to be executed, so to speak, as it is. On the other

hand, the Bologna process in this perspective has been a kind of a political will of the European ministers in charge of higher education. It was clear in the Declaration that the process is not a path leading to the 'standardisation' or 'uniformisation' in European higher education, but is merely aimed at creating a convergent European higher education. However, its message is so strong within the structure since the signatory countries have convinced to the need of attaining their common objectives to create a European space for higher education by 2010. To sum up, in spite of their distinction in the policy-making process, Erasmus programme and the Bologna process are hand in hand to further develop and enhance the progress of European higher education.

To the Netherlands higher education system it is clear that Erasmus programme and the Bologna process have their own implications. The Erasmus programme can be an advantage as well as leave obstacles to the Netherlands side. The progress of Erasmus programme in this country in the future will much depend on how it responds and addresses the existing obstacles, both in mobility and administrative aspects. Whereas the complicated problem faced by the Netherlands in the Bologna process is the adoption of the Anglo-Saxon two-cycle university system.

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The development of higher education within the EU structure is rapidly in progress. As long as Erasmus programme and the Bologna process are concerned, there are abundance of works to do and to solve both in the levels of the Community and the participating countries. And this process itself, we believe, would bring the participating countries closer and stand shoulder to shoulder, which would eventually contribute to the more integrated, welfare, quality, and perhaps help to return another European 'Golden Age.'

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