

special edition

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Morten Østergaard (Photo: BFUG Bucharest)



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# BUCHAREST REVISITED

10 points of view on Bologna after the EHEA Ministerial Conference

## EUROPE: ANACHRONISTIC COMMUNIQUÉ

Ivan Delibašić, author for the newspaper New Europe, argues that ministers pledged to enhance employability, lifelong learning and the entrepreneurial skills of students in the Bucharest Communiqué. The wording "was obviously clumsily added to the rest of the text, as it clearly lacks content linkage with the rest of the document. Similarly, both the commission and parliament urged for modernisation of the educational systems and curricula, with the same nominal aim, but with no particular guidance on how."

The "communiqué released by the education ministers following their Ministerial Conference was even more anachronistic (than the call from the European Commission one week earlier). Envisaged to gradually transform and harmonise various European systems, the Bologna Process was never equipped with emergency response instruments or flexible and adjustable mechanisms. As a consequence, ministers came with a set of conclusions which address pre-2008 priorities; access, mobility, recognition."

Mobility, as one of the key elements of the proposal, "was designed primarily to break boundaries between European nations and to provide youngsters with an opportunity to experience other European cultures in a relaxed and positive way. The cultural awareness and language skills obtained through mobility again can help job creation, but have limited impact on job creation. Apart from that, transfers between mediocre universities do not really contribute to academic excellence."

Article by Ivan Delibasic, *New Europe*, 30-04-12  
[neurope.eu/](http://neurope.eu/)

## EUROPE: DECLINE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Education International (EI), the world's largest global union federation representing more than three million higher education and research staff in 100 national organisations worldwide, "has always expressed its strong support for the development of the European Higher Education Area, and of higher education as a vital public good which contributes to the social, cultural and economic development of communities, regions and states."

However, EI also warns that "some negative aspects of the Bologna process are clearly related to an improper way of implementing the ECTS, excess of work load for students and rigidity, with negative consequences for mobility", as well as "bad implementation of the three cycle structure, with obstacles to go from Bachelor to Master level [...] and working conditions of academic staff have degraded and salaries and pensions worsen in a significant number of countries in the face of increasing workloads. Careers also worsen in an environment of increasing level of competition."

"What is also regrettable is the reported decline in academic freedom across the EHEA. This could be related to the deterioration of democratic governance, often introduced in the name of restricted budget, however in fact representing spread of ideas of the new public management," EI writes in its report for the Bologna Ministerial Conference in Bucharest.

EI press release, 02-05-2012  
[ei-ie.org/](http://ei-ie.org/)  
EI Bologna Report  
[ehea.info/](http://ehea.info/)

Photo: BFUG Bucharest





Photo: BFUG Bucharest

## AUSTRIA: BOLOGNA NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED

Science minister Karlheinz Töchterle said with satisfaction that with 19 percent, Austria has already nearly achieved the Bologna goal of 20 percent student mobility. He emphasised, however, that Austria has problems with 'asymmetric' mobility – that is, the high influx of German 'numerus-clausus' refugees'.

The rectors' conference uniko acknowledges the difficulties Austrian universities face when applying ECTS points. The "rigid translation of weekly hours into ECTS points" does not yet reflect the real study workload. Also the connection of learning outcomes with ECTS points needs further work. A positive effect of the Bologna Process is, according to uniko, a stronger focus on the quality and evaluation of teaching, oriented at the needs of students.

Austrian students, represented by the student union ÖH, were more critical. ÖH president Janine Wulz demands a "radical enlargement of study grants" as the only means to achieve more access to education and mobility.

## GERMANY: STUDENTS SEE BOLOGNA AS A FAILURE

A recent survey, conducted by the online careers portal Monster, shows that students in German-speaking countries take a very different position on the Bologna Process. Nearly eight out of ten German students are very critical and see the Bologna reforms as a failure; only ten percent perceive advantages for job seekers or employers under the new study structures. Opinions are more equally divided in Austria and Switzerland, where respondents were not predominantly negative or positive in their perception of higher education reforms in Europe.

Furthermore, according to the survey "Recruiting Trends 2012", more than half of the 1000 biggest companies in Germany believe that the Master title should be the normal university qualification. 57 percent of employers now require a Masters degree where in the past a 'Diplom' was requested. Only one in five employers view the new degree structure as generally positive.

Recruiting Trends 2012, Monster, Feb. 2012 (in German)  
[monster.de/](http://monster.de/)

## ITALY: A COPY OF AN OLD AMERICAN MODEL DOESN'T WORK

In a long essay, the historian Andrea Mariuzzo, currently Visiting Scholar at the Cornell University Institute for European Studies in Ithaca (USA) depicts Italy's joy and sorrow since the start of the Bologna Process.

Mariuzzo first of all points out that imitating the American university model as it was in the 80s and 90s, and attempting to enforce it in Europe by decree, is not only impossible but damaging. He shares the widespread criticism that the attempt to 'introduce comparable degrees', 'a credit system based on the workload' and a 'shared approach to quality assurance' has led to a rigid over-sized system of control with the inevitable effects of bureaucracy and inefficiency.

Those responsible in Italy for the Bologna Process since Luigi Berlinguer have not reformed the university tradition "based on maximum discretion and minimum responsibility for the majority of strategic decision makers". And top-down quality evaluation didn't help faculties to overcome sclerotic structures of scientific and administrative recruitment, nor have they forced faculties to break with consolidated channels of employment negotiation among interest groups. "This is," Mariuzzo continues, "the main reason why I don't believe that the national quality agency will produce incisive results in the end."

Instead of defining universal 'harmonised' course structures across all Bologna Process member states, the historian argues, referring in particular to the humanities and social sciences, that a far greater liberty of choice should be left to the students and what they consider useful for their future professional path.

Article by Andrea Mariuzzo, *Linkiesta*, 16-04-12 (in Italian)  
[linkiesta.it/](http://linkiesta.it/)



## “Family Photo”



### **LATVIA: STUDENTS CAN'T PARTICIPATE IN BOLOGNA CONFERENCE**

The Latvian Student Association (LSA) did not participate in this year's Bologna Conference, as the Ministry of Education refused to cover the costs involved. LSA President Edward Ratnieks expressed his disagreement with the government move. The Students' Union explained Education Minister Roberts Kīlis' decision by claiming that they want to avoid responsibility and that the Minister of Education is showing reluctance to collaborate with students.

### **LUXEMBOURG: IN FAVOUR OF PORTABLE MOBILITY GRANTS**

Education minister François Biltgen underlined his country's commitment to student mobility and its positive effect on the quality of study. He said that recognition of degrees is an essential part of it and calls for an automatic cross-border recognition of degrees.

Biltgen is also in favour of the concept of portable grants. He also said that only half a dozen of the 27 EU member states allow their students to take their grants for study abroad.

### **MONTENEGRO: DO GRADES ACTUALLY MEAN ANYTHING?**

The government of Montenegro is satisfied with the grade they received amid recommendations confirming that significant improvements had been made and that the system is successfully following Bologna standards. Montenegro obtained 35 points from a possible 45 and became the leading country in implementing the Bologna Process in the region, leaving behind Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria.

But the students from Montenegro disagree. According to them the process of implementing Bologna in their country is a disaster, as the new structure of studying requires much more work in a much shorter space of time, bringing with it a greater workload, high amounts of stress and a poor quality of learning.

Press release by the  
Luxembourg government,  
26-04-2012 (in French)  
[gouvernement.lu/](http://gouvernement.lu/)

## SWITZERLAND: NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK NEEDED

Press release by the State  
Secretary, 27-04-2012  
(in German and French)  
[news.admin.ch/](http://news.admin.ch/)

The Swiss delegation, led by State Secretary Mauro Dell'Ambrogio, participated in the ministerial conference in Bucharest. From the Swiss perspective, the implementation of the Bachelor and Master structure is nearly complete (93 percent), ECTS are used in all courses and the 'Diploma Supplement' is issued automatically and free of charge with the degrees. As a challenge for Switzerland, Dell'Ambrogio described the implementation of the national qualification framework and the consequent orientation on learning outcomes.

## UK: BOLOGNA PROCESS STIMULATES CHANGE

Peter Scott, professor of higher education studies and former vice-chancellor of Kingston University, ponders how the Bologna Process can be interesting for Great Britain, which already has several top universities. He acknowledges that "beneath the suffocating weight of E-acronyms, transparency instruments, action lines and the usual Euro-babble, a quiet revolution has been under way in European higher education – stimulated by the spirit of Bologna."

"Others have noticed," he continues. "I remember being at a meeting when the state commissioner for education in Wisconsin asked, only half-jokingly, how Wisconsin could join the Bologna process. Across Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia there is a belief that something is stirring in Europe."

"So what have we to learn from 'them'? (If) our universities are so much more entrepreneurial, why are French or Dutch graduates just as employable in the global knowledge economy? As for scientific citations, the top performers, in proportion to population, are small countries such as Finland and Switzerland, not the UK."

Article by Peter Scott,  
*The Guardian*, 30-04-12  
[guardian.co.uk/](http://guardian.co.uk/)

"The Bologna process has been key to this success of European higher education – in spirit if not substance. It has provided a flag around which reformers have rallied, and been a catalyst for innovations that had little to do with the action lines agreed at successive EHEA ministerial meetings."



Photo: Bianca Macovei

## bologna interviews

### "WE WANT TO START A PEER-LEARNING INITIATIVE"

*Dominic Orr is Head of the International Coordination of the Eurostudent Project. He has been working in various working groups leading up to the ministerial conference in Bucharest and has contributed to the Implementation Report. The interview was conducted by Bianca Macovei.*

► **Mr Orr, in your opinion has the Bologna Process made positive or negative progress?**

I think the Bologna Process since 2010 has been confronted with a real challenge. Because up until then we were dealing mainly with structural questions – do we have Bachelors, do we have Masters, can we talk about credits? – Purely technical things, now it's more complicated.

When we had the last communiqué in Leuven we talked about maximising people's potential. The new communiqué looks beyond the average student and looks much more at the balance between students' lives and their study conditions.

It is positive progress that the focus is now on different types of students and it is recognised in all countries. The social dimension is sometimes held back because people associate it immediately with giving poor students more money. So students say 'this is great' and ministers say 'we can't do that'. But the social message is more about perspective and that perspective has changed.

The very positive thing I see in the communiqué is that we want to start a peer-learning initiative between countries on their measures and efforts to improve the social dimension. This is a huge step forward, this is much better than talking about benchmarks or targets.

We need to understand the focus of the governments and what is really happening on the ground. And that is where the peer learning initiative should really help.

► **How can equal social chances in Higher Education be achieved?**

They can be achieved by making sure that students have sufficient funding so it is still a question of giving financial support to students. This doesn't have to be grants, it can also be loans. In most countries which are particularly generous with their support, we find a large amount of that support is a loan, for example in Sweden, in Norway.

But the other way is to try and make sure that students can manage to balance studying and working. This is going to be a growing challenge for students and therefore a knock-on challenge for Higher Education provision. Many countries are working on this now. In the Netherlands they're talking about trying to make a 'future-proof' Higher Education. In Ireland there's a big focus on flexibility and provision. These are the kind of developments which are starting now and need to continue.

► **What about Germany?**

In Germany on the institutional level there are a number of institutions now making huge efforts to become more inclusive, to widen their participation. On a national level we can't see that yet because it takes a long time for these things to work through the system and its individual institutions. This is a very positive development although we won't see it on the big national statistics yet.

At this kind of conference it's very hard for us to talk about the institutional level because we've already got the challenge of talking about 47 very diverse countries. We look at the data on a national level and we don't see big changes, but I think we will, and that's the positive thing.



Photo: HIS



## BOLOGNA – A EUROPEAN PLANNING NIGHTMARE

*Stefan Kühl is professor of sociology in Bielefeld, Germany. He recently brought attention to the devastating consequences of the Bologna Reform on universities with his book 'The Sudoku Effect: Universities in a vicious cycle of bureaucracy'. An interview by Tino Brömme, translation by Harriet Bailey.*

### ► Mr Kühl, what's wrong with the Bucharest Communiqué?

The Bucharest Communiqué and its central elements makes clear that for the European education ministers, the Bologna Process is about 'more of the same'. It reiterates the compartmentalisation of university study into Bachelors, Masters and PhDs, the use of the credit point system, quality assurance agencies and the qualification framework etc. Nobody links the failure of the goals, particularly in the area of student mobility to fundamental mistakes in the reform – especially to the introduction of the ECTS system. Instead, they just prescribe more of the 'Bologna medicine'. Fundamental criticism aimed at the ECTS system and the qualification framework in a number of European countries is being ignored. It is apparent that no reflection on the negative impact of the Bologna Process has taken place. Ministers, responsible for education, show that they themselves are not ready to learn from the unwanted side-effects of their own reforms.

### ► Aren't you optimistic that this might improve in the future?

No, on the contrary! To date, the introduction of ECTS credits in universities has produced a planning nightmare on an unknown scale. The new communiqué's demand for a stronger connection of 'study credits with both learning outcomes and student workload' will lead to an even further bureaucratisation of universities.

Otherwise, the communiqué – just like its predecessors – is just the usual list of nice-sounding but ultimately meaningless adjectives. There is talk of 'creative, innovative, critically-thinking and responsible graduates', who are supposed to combine 'transversal, multidisciplinary and innovation skills and competencies with up-to-date subject knowledge'. This repeated evocation of values serves to conceal the effects of bureaucratisation through the Bologna Reforms.

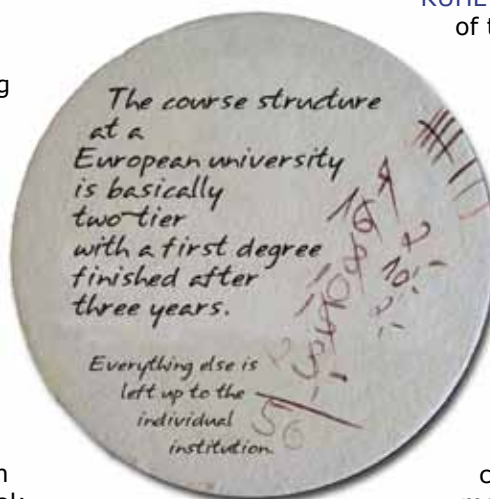


Photo:  
Metaplan

## BOLOGNA ON A BEER MAT

Universities, faculties, lecturers and students are groaning under the pressure of growing paperwork and complexity when it comes to applying the sky-rocketing regulations of the Bologna Process: ECTS, modules, descriptions of competencies, learning outcomes, employability. Instead of more choice, more mobility, more excellence and more variety, 13 years of Bologna have created more exams, more evaluation, more control and more bureaucracy – all of which are likely to escalate further.

German professor of sociology Stefan Kühl has thus made a radical proposal:



**KÜHL SAYS:** "The intended positive effects of the Bologna reforms – increasing mobility and reducing the number of students who break off their studies – will be reached exclusively through the introduction of a two-tier study phase with an initial stage completed after three years.

"At first sight it appears difficult to modify this arrangement for over forty different countries, but the suggestion of 'Bologna on a beer mat' will enable this to be simplified. Whether European countries, or better still, individual countries, will choose to work with modules or ECTS points, is up to them."

## bologna books

### THE SUDOKU EFFECT UNIVERSITIES AND THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF BUREAUCRACY

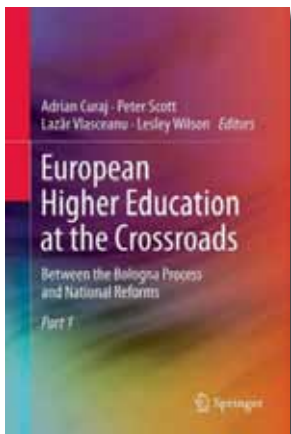
What is causing the increase in bureaucracy in universities? How can we explain the school-like nature of bachelor and masters courses? Responsibility lies neither with a neo-liberal conspiracy to reorganise universities or the fantasies of control that university management entertains, nor indeed the technical clumsiness in course design.

Stefan Kühl shows instead that this is the unintentional side-effect of a seemingly small change in the organisation of degrees: namely, the introduction of credit points as a new currency of measure at universities. Because of a student's obligation to plan every single working hour in advance, a 'Sudoku Effect' is created – the need to combine credited

modules, exams and sessions in such a way that the degree 'adds up'. A complexity that even computers find it hard to master and an increase in tests count among the consequences of a continuous refinement of the regulatory rulebook that seeks to respond to its own shortcomings.



Stefan Kühl  
Original title: "Der Sudoku-Effekt: Hochschulen im Teufelskreis der Bürokratie. Eine Streitschrift"  
transcript | February 2012  
ISBN: 978-3-8376-1958-4  
German 172 pages paperback €19.80  
**Order**



### EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE CROSSROADS BETWEEN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS AND NATIONAL REFORMS

Romania hosted the 2012 Bologna Conference and the Third Bologna Policy Forum. In preparation for these meetings, the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) organised the 'Future of Higher Education – Bologna Process Researchers'

Conference in October 2011, with the support of the European University Association and the Romanian National Committee for UNESCO. The conference brought the voices of researchers into international-level policy making in higher ed. Its results are presented in this book.

This book offers an unprecedented opportunity for higher education researchers to interact and contribute to the political process shaping the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and to national policy agendas in more than 100 participant countries for the 2012 ministerial events. The book collects more than 50 articles focusing on vital issues in European higher education. These are arranged in sections addressing the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Principles; Teaching and Learning; Quality Assurance; Mobility; Governance; Funding; Diversification of Missions; Futures and Foresight.

Adrian Curaj, Peter Scott, Lazăr Vlasceanu, Lesley Wilson (eds.)  
Springer | March 2012  
ISBN 978-94-007-3936-9  
1103 pages hardcover €213.95

**Order**

### EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL POLICIES FOR ACADEMIC MOBILITY LINKING RHETORIC, PRACTICE AND MOBILITY TRENDS

European students have become internationally mobile. Have European efforts been mirrored by similar attempts at the national level? Are national policies and strategies in line with the European mobility ambitions, and to what extent? Is there cross-country convergence in the mobility policies, priorities and instruments of individual European countries? These are some of the questions the present study explores.

The book explores similarities and differences between national approaches with regard to type of mobility, quantitative mobility targets, priority regions/countries, and policy-making actors, amongst others. Next to a Europe-wide overview, the study contains in-depth explorations of eight European countries.

Irina Ferencz, Bernd Wächter (eds.)  
Lemmens | 2012  
ISBN 978-3-86856-005-3  
English 244 pages paperback €29.80

**Order**



## *bologna policy documents and studies*

### **BUCHAREST COMMUNIQUÉ**

The Communiqué, presented by Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, takes stock of the achievements of the Bologna Process and outlines future priorities for the coming three years. Its main concerns are mobility, widening access, student-centred learning and employability, quality assurance and developing qualifications frameworks.

Bucharest Communiqué  
English | 5 pages

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### **MOBILITY FOR BETTER LEARNING MOBILITY STRATEGY 2020 FOR THE EHEA**

This strategy paper, part of three years of investigation by the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), focuses on the importance of mobility and internationalisation in higher education, and outlines key action required by the EHEA countries to pave the way for more high-quality exchanges and fewer obstacles across the continent.

Representatives from all 47 member countries of the EHEA have adopted the report, which outlines plans until 2020. It aims to increase student and staff mobility in all three cycles of the Bologna Process — at bachelor, master and doctoral levels. The main measure described in the Strategy is that of the concrete target for 20 percent student mobility by 2020, covering both degree mobility, where the student's entire degree is carried out abroad, and credit mobility, where at least 15 ECTS points or three months are undertaken abroad. The Strategy also breaks new ground by acknowledging the dangers of brain drain as mobility increases and advocates less disruptive forms of mobility.

Mobility Strategy 2020  
English | 5 pages

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### **THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA IN 2012 BOLOGNA PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION REPORT**

The Implementation Report for 2012 is the first year that several different lines of enquiry have been placed together in one document. It reflects the framework of the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué and is the result of a joint effort by Eurostat, Eurydice and Eurostudent, overseen by the Bologna Follow-up Group. It describes the state of implementation of the Bologna Process in 2012 from various perspectives and outlines the objectives of the Bologna Process for 2020. Seven main topics are included: the context of the European Higher Education Area; degrees and qualifications; quality assurance and the social dimension of higher education; effective outcomes and the employability of students; lifelong learning and mobility. The report comes after three years of investigation by specialists in their fields, although overall the results are not that different from previous studies.

Implementation Report  
English | 220 pages

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### **THE STEEPLECHASE BROCHURE PLANS FOR AND OBSTACLES TO TEMPORARY ENROLMENT ABROAD**

This brochure, presented by Dominic Orr of the HIS-HF (Institute of Higher Education Information System), analyses Eurostudent results to identify obstacles to temporary enrolment, named as a key problem in the Mobility Strategy 2020.

Five countries are included in the study: Austria, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland. The goal for study-related experience abroad by 2020 in the two solely German-speaking countries is half of all students, while in Switzerland and the Netherlands it is closer to a quarter. The results will enable countries to review their existing measures and develop new ones in order to foster student enrolment abroad.

Steeplechase  
English | 10 pages

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## TRANSPARENCY TOOLS ACROSS THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

This report offers insights to those who are confronted by a wealth of information regarding higher education in the EHEA and attempts to provide some basic reference points. The report, prepared by the Transparency Tools Working Group for the 2012 Ministerial Conference at the request of the EHEA Ministers, reflects discussions within the Transparency Tools Working Group. Its recommendations were taken into account by the Bologna Follow-Up Group when drafting the Bucharest Communiqué. Transparency tools can be used to make informed decisions when used appropriately, but the report points out that they also have their limits.

Transparency Tools  
Working Group Report

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Further reports of the Bologna Process Working Groups and Networks:

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- **SOCIAL DIMENSION WORKING GROUP REPORT**

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- **ANNEX: PROPOSAL FOR A PILOT PROJECT TO PROMOTE PEER LEARNING ON THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE**

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- **NESSIE — NETWORK OF EXPERTS ON STUDENT SUPPORT IN EUROPE REPORT**

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- "BOLOGNA WITH STUDENT EYES 2012"

## BOLOGNA POLICY FORUM DOCUMENTS

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- **BOLOGNA POLICY FORUM STATEMENT**

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- **BOLOGNA POLICY FORUM THEMATIC SESSIONS' BACKGROUND PAPER**

## REALISATION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

The current edition 01/2012 of 'Beiträge zur Hochschulforschung' by the Bavarian Institute for Higher Education Research and Planning in Munich addresses the question how the Bologna Process has been practically implemented.

Scientific engagement with the two-tier system is presented, as well as the opinions of practitioners who have instrumentally steered and accompanied the introduction of this system at universities. Contributors to the report include Rosalind Pritchard, talking about the case of British higher education; Tino Bargel, Michael Ramm and Frank Multrus on difficulties at Bachelor level; Olivia Key and Christoph Seeßelberg on universities of applied sciences, as well as articles by Christoph Mülke on the administrative side of implementation and by Oliver Jahraus on the "Reform of the reform" at the Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich.

Original title: "Umsetzung des  
Bologna-Prozesses"  
IHF | German

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*Contributions to Bulletin N°134 - May 9, 2012: Tino Brömme (editor-in-chief), Harriet Bailey, Ana Jović, Armin Höhling, Antigoni Avgeropoulou and Bianca Macovei*