

The Bologna-Reform

An Introduction for students



The Bologna Reform an introduction: The Bologna Reform is still considered one of the most significant reforms in the field of education and higher education policy. The process, which began in 1999, had three main goals: the standardisation of study programmes, greater mobility between individual member states, and the better adaptation of universities to the needs of their students as well as the better adaptation of universities to the needs of the economy. The aim was to create a transnational higher education area. In Germany, the effects of the Bologna Process were most evident in the restructuring of degree programmes towards Bachelor's and Master's degrees, but the possibility of Erasmus exchanges and international semester periods were also part of the Bologna Process.

The truth is, however, that the Bologna Process is a less familiar term for most students today. The reason for this is the fact that most students who are enrolled at a German university today did not actively participate in the reform processes or were still children at that time.



The reform process: Unfortunately, it became evident during the years of the reform that it could not be implemented in all member states at the same rate. In 1999, it was originally planned that the reform would be completed by 2010. However, many member states have not yet fully adopted the reform.

Another reason for this is the fact that Bologna is a legally non-binding agreement and the issue of higher education policy is often not at the top of the political agenda. Looking back now, more than 20 years after the start of the reform, at the action that has been taken, a thoroughly mixed picture emerges. The introduction of Bachelor's and Master's degrees can be seen as a great success, and mobility has also increased exponentially as a result of Bologna. More than 30% of German students spend at least one semester abroad during their studies.

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Bologna today: If you look in detail, however, you can also see that the reform was not implemented so ambitiously everywhere. In Germany in particular, many elements failed, as it is often the case, because of overloaded bureaucracy. Often, attempts were made to squeeze old curricula into the new structures and requirements, but this only succeeded to a limited extent. In recent years, a new phenomenon has emerged alongside the administrative challenges. Particularly in the eastern member states, the autonomy of the universities and the associated freedom of science have been massively restricted. Here, too, there is a need for a clear positioning of the other member states and an articulation of the fact that these developments are in no way compatible with the values of the Bologna Reform and the EU.

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