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Work Package 9: Thematic comparisons  
Bologna Process as modernisation and Europeanisation

Anna Triandafyllidou, Ayhan Kaya, Ayşe Tecmen,  
Hara Kouki, and Martina Topić

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# ***Bologna Process as modernisation and Europeanisation***

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## **Introduction**

This comparative report intends to trace the processes of identity formation in the cases of Greece, Croatia, and Turkey as these have taken shape through the Europeanisation of national education known as the ‘Bologna Process’. Higher education differs from one country to another as it reflects the relations between the university and society. Homogenisation of higher education accompanies the universalisation of knowledge, increasing the possibilities of studies and creating opportunities for mobility as well as setting the criteria over what the knowledge is all about. However, there is no single way to move towards that aim. This report tries to answer the following questions: What is the Bologna Process? What does it actually signify? How has it been interpreted? What does the Bologna Process mean to Greece, Turkey and Croatia in reconstructing their national and European identities? What are the similarities and dissimilarities between these countries’ perspectives on the Bologna Process?

The Bologna Process, ever since it began in 1999, has encountered several different criticisms and protests in the member states. In Greece, reforms have been perceived as attacks against social equality and justice, driven by market forces, leading to months of anti-government and anti-globalisation manifestations and public strikes. In Croatia, the Bologna Process introduced fees, and also generated mass student protests against the introduction of tuitions and ‘Europeanization’. The Bologna reforms have also been called into question in Turkey due to the rise of Euroscepticism, leading policy makers to frame them in terms of internationalisation, and concerns over the market orientation of higher education were eclipsed in the country over concerns about students’ financial constraints and visa problems.

By focusing on the main discursive *topoi* that run through the opposition to the reforms, this report aims at comparing how non-state collective and individual actors come to terms with the Europeanisation and modernisation of Greek, Croatian and Turkish higher

education systems with a view to understanding how discourses on national and European identity are contested, negotiated or maintained. Our analysis is based on press coverage, analysis of government discourses, and qualitative interviews conducted with civil society representatives as well as lay people. While the demonstrations against the Bologna Process were mainly led by students and academics who did not succeed in extending the movement to the larger public, interviews conducted with lay people reveal a certain number of shared visions on the nature of higher education, and, notably, a continued attachment to the central role of the state as opposed to a more neo-liberal vision of higher education.

Departing from the theory of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt, 2000) as well as the IME project's rationale, the report attends to the voices and arguments challenging educational reform rhetoric from a comparative perspective and allows us to examine the way Europe, modernity and the nation are linked in each case in forming European identities. The aim of such a comparative study is to suggest a possible analytical framework and a way to think about Europe that would bring together different national experiences and patterns of behaviour in not only adopting but also debating the EU reforms.

### **Official Discourse of Bologna: A Learning Process**

The Bologna Process was launched after 29 education ministers signed a declaration in Bologna in June 1999<sup>1</sup> to reform and harmonise the structures of their higher education systems. Each signatory country committed itself to reform its own higher education system in order to create overall convergence at the European level by 2010. The objectives adopted include a common framework of readable and comparable university degrees, the introduction of two cycles of degrees at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in all countries, with the first degrees no shorter than three years, to equip the universities with the instruments to respond to the needs of the labour market, and to provide them with the possibilities of the mobility of students, academics and administrative staff. It also referred to the creation of a European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The goal is to render higher education in Europe more compact, comparable and compatible, and to attract student mobility.<sup>2</sup>

The process originates from the recognition that in spite of their 'valuable differences', European higher education systems are facing common internal and external challenges

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<sup>1</sup> Additional process extensions occurred in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2010. The Bologna Process now encompasses 47 countries.

<sup>2</sup> For the official website of the European Higher Education Area, see <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/>

related to the diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates, or the expansion of private and transnational education. The Bologna Process, thus, has urged member states to respond to the growth of today's challenging society of knowledge and the impacts of globalisation by rendering the 'Europe of Knowledge' internationally competitive. In practical terms, it referred to the harmonisation of cycle degrees and to the creation of a common credit transfer system, and evaluation criteria that would enable students to address demanding labour market needs and the impacts of globalisation.

In the official discursive *topoi* of the Bologna Process, one could trace the footprints of the repetition of the concepts of *flexibility*, *credibility*, *rationalisation*, *efficiency* and *openness* along with references to *employability*, *interdisciplinarity*, *economic competitiveness* and *internationalisation of student programmes* in order for the national education systems to be able to respond to *current global labour market challenges* and the *Lisbon Strategy* through incorporating best practices from other European experiences.<sup>3</sup> The popularity of this kind of neo-liberal discourse was also evident in the preceding official documents of the European Union in the late 1990s and early 2000s. A critical discourse analysis of these documents reveals that the EU was giving priority to terms such as skills, market, efficiency, competitiveness, internationalisation and global market in order to be able to show its determination to catch up with leading world economic powers like the USA and Japan.<sup>4</sup>

The early days of the construction of the Bologna Process coincide with a set of neo-liberal efforts dedicated to the extension of traditional European values, which constitute European identity narratives. For instance, the *Lisbon Strategy* forms part of the official discursive construction of European identity narratives, securing and legitimizing standardisation and the implementation of new policies, on the one hand, and a new value set on the other (Wodak, 2010; Krzyżanowski and Wodak, 2010). Such a discourse-historical analysis explains why the *Bologna Process* and many other attempts in other policy areas seeking to standardise policies in all nation states cause so many tensions. National identity constructions collide with transnational strategies and aims in a way that leads to hegemonic struggles over values, discourses and social practices as well as to nationally context-dependent recontextualisation and policies of implementation.

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Bologna documents in an historical sequence see the official website of the European Higher Education Area, <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/>

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Ruth Wodak (2010) also reveals the discursive shift of the European Commission in the same period, concentrating on the ways in which the Commission perceived multilingualism.

However, one should note that the Bologna Process is a learning process. It is clearly seen in the official documents of the Process that the Ministers of Education of the member states to the Bologna Process are keen on taking the critics into account when they make projections for the future. For instance, in the official Budapest-Vienna Declaration of the European Higher Education Area it is openly stated that the ministers have taken note of the independent assessment and the stakeholders' reports, and that they welcome their affirmation that institutions of higher education, staff and students increasingly identify with the goals of the Bologna Process. They also reflect upon the recent protests taking place in some countries vis-a-vis the Bologna Process. As will be claimed in the following sections of this paper, they also argue that these developments and measures are not necessarily related to the Bologna Process, and that some of the Bologna aims and reforms have not been properly implemented and explained in the member countries. The willingness of the Bologna team to acknowledge and to listen to the critical voices raised among staff and students should be certified here.<sup>5</sup> A critical analysis of the recent official documents and declarations also indicates that the decision makers of the Bologna Process, mainly the ministers, are sensitive in changing their discourse from a market-oriented neo-liberalism to a more social-oriented classical liberalism.

### **Protests and dissenting voices in Greece, Turkey and Croatia:**

To begin with, mapping out debates concerning educational reforms reveals social expectations, demands and frustrations, as well as tensions between state and society and among various social groups. Moreover, the historically and ideologically charged role of public education in European countries transforms any attempt to implement reforms in universities in a key battleground on which issues of national identity are debated. At the same time, the discussion concerning the European higher education area is unavoidably confronted with issues of multiculturalism and globalisation, as well as with the changes in the labour market brought about by technological innovations. In a few words, the analysis of European countries' participation in, and discourses over, the Bologna Process reflects the tensions that characterise in general national identities and the contemporary challenges posed by their relationship with Europe and modernisation. To this end, we have concentrated on

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<sup>5</sup> See Article 6 of the Budapest-Vienna Declaration of the Bologna Process adopted by the Ministers of Education on 12 March 2010. It is possible to see the official declarations of the Bologna Process since 1999 in its official website: [http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/Bologna/2010\\_conference/index.htm](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/Bologna/2010_conference/index.htm)

three different European countries to ensure the heterogeneity of findings: one EU member state (Greece) and two EU candidate states (Croatia and Turkey).

## **Greece: a critique of neo-liberalism**

Greece was one of the signatory countries to the 1999 Bologna Declaration with the goal of modernising its tertiary education and improving its quality.<sup>6</sup> The two mainstream parties in the country (the socialist PASOK and the centre-right New Democracy) have alternated in government between 1999-2009, and they have both tried to implement the declaration of the Bologna Process through massive reforms aiming at ‘modernising’ the quality of the national higher education system, which has been going through a multi-faceted legitimacy crisis.<sup>7</sup> Greek educational policy has been a highly politicised issue in the country and any attempt at educational reforms have tended to provoke controversy and conflict. Thus, even if major political parties supported the reforms related to the Bologna Process, these remained incomplete due to the escalation of public contestation. In April 2006, a draft proposal for a bill regarding the internal workings of university education was issued,<sup>8</sup> which generated protests that intensified dramatically in 2007 when a constitutional amendment was proposed to enable private tertiary education institutions to function in a position equal to public universities. The rationale behind the quest for a constitutional amendment was to align Greece with European educational developments. The wave of unrest unleashed in 2000 was led by far left groups, but during 2006-2007, the protests had a snowball effect, triggering intense public debates and violent protests all around the country. It was during 2006 and 2007 that more than 60 per cent of the public considered student mobilisations justified, leading to the failure of the reforms.

The Minister of Education, Marietta Giannakou, stated in 2007 that “all over Europe, and especially in Greece, education is the vehicle through which the state enables citizens to shape

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<sup>6</sup> This is comprised of Universities, Polytechnics and Technological Educational Institutes in Greece. All education levels are overseen by the Ministry of National Education. Although Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs and tertiary institutions are nominally autonomous, the Ministry is responsible for their funding and the allocation and distribution of students to undergraduate courses.

<sup>7</sup> A 2005 OECD report notes that Greece ranks third from the bottom after Indonesia and Slovakia, with only 8.4% of total public spending allocated to education. Additionally, the scarcity of higher education places forces Greek parents to pay exorbitant fees to privately-run preparatory schools to support their children’s efforts to pass the annual qualifying exams into a public university. This cost particularly affects the lower social groups who view education as the core means of achieving upward social mobility and employment in a country in which youth unemployment is among the highest in Europe (22.3% among ages 15-24).

<sup>8</sup> This referred to cutting down of expenses, limiting the participation of student representatives in rectors’ elections, abolishing the ‘academic asylum’, restricting the time-frame allowed to students to complete their studies and, permitting the function of private educational institutions.

their personalities and enter the ever-more demanding labour market.” On the one hand, the related discourses of different education ministers underline the pressing need to converge the Greek universities towards European higher education standards, as the country is lagging behind the rest of Europe and needs to catch up. The project of the Europeanisation of education in Greece is often equated with modernisation, which means in this specific context the improvement of quality and competitiveness of the national universities; and it is a project accompanied by references to various terms such as employability, economic efficiency and global market challenges. On the other hand, state representatives have so far recognised the problems and embarrassments posed by persistent catching-up efforts, which have never been fully materialised due to the structural elements of national identity making the country a pre-modern and less competitive actor in economic terms.

In justifying their opposition to such reforms, non-state actors proclaim that Bologna reforms would subject education to the laws of the market by ‘cutting off university expenses while providing fast and directly consumable professional skills’. Even if the wave of unrest that was unleashed in 2000 was politically led by far left student groups, it was gradually joined by almost all student associations, teacher federations and the workers’ confederation, while 60.4% considered this student mobilisation to be justified.<sup>9</sup> In reality, those reforms were perceived as legitimising the quantification of knowledge and the subjection of Universities to the needs of private capital, eroding the public and democratic nature of education in the country. A student member of a far-leftist group observed that during the demonstrations all students considered the concepts adapted in the Bologna proclamations as denoting something else:

“Evaluation meant classification according to the needs of the market, lifelong learning meant that no value will be attributed anymore to your degree and that you will have to constantly prove your efficiency according to a competitive labour market in which you are consumable. That is the real meaning of flexibility, adaptability and renewal of skills”.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Enet 22/03/2006, referring to the public opinion survey conducted by Metron Analysis.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Dimitris Grapsas, student, member of NAR-EAAK (far-left student group), of the Youth for Communist Liberation, and secretary of Student Youth (2006-07), 10 July 2010, Athens.

On the other hand, the President of the National Education Council (ESYP) declared that if there is something to unite the European citizens, it is the “commonality of Enlightenment values”.<sup>11</sup> These values were meaningful to all non-state actors, who do not reject the notion of Europe, but instead, explicitly defend a model of education in accordance with the European traditions. Similarly, a University rector noted that

“the European model of university education, on which the supremacy of Western civilisation has been installed, is based on three axes: fighting against dogmatism and the monopoly of knowledge, the dissemination of free thought independently of political or economic goals, and access to public and free education.”<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, departing from the Bologna issue, lay people interpreted the term ‘Europe’ as denoting a mere financial association made up of private interests, in which some countries or technocrats supervise and some others find themselves powerless, in which less and less unity is experienced among citizens, and policies are imposed from above at the expense of lay people’s benefit. In the discursive map of the lay people, one could find the same rhetoric embracing the ideas of historical continuity, broad culture, rich civilisation and critical and independent thinking that abstains from material anxieties.<sup>13</sup> The idea of shared problems with other European peoples is also another aspect that seems to turn ‘Europe’ into a more meaningful concept and to reproduce the idea of Europe as a ‘community of sentiments’.<sup>14</sup>

It is surprising, though, that even official state declarations seem to share this civilisational rhetoric. All Ministers, regardless of their political affiliation, repeatedly emphasise the relevance of Greece’s historical and cultural heritage for all educational reforms at the European-wide level, as well as the ecumenical nature of Greece’s legacy and its contribution to and connections with current modernity. Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis (New Democracy) claimed in 2005 that

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Thanos Veremis, Professor of Political Science at the University of Athens and head of the National Education Council (ESYP), 27 July 2010, Athens.

<sup>12</sup> Professor. Ksanthopoulos (2001) has been one of the most important non-state actors in the protests against Bologna, who refused to be interviewed but instead submitted a written text exposing his opposition to the Bologna Process.

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that those stressing the values contained within European identity are mostly people of migrant origin and individuals over 50 years of age.

<sup>14</sup> The term ‘community of sentiments’ is used by Arjun Appadurai (1996) to explain modern collective entities such as nations, ethnic groups, and religious communities shaped by a constant flow of identical signs, discourses, texts, documents, news, messages and interpretations travelling across cyberspace.

“we cannot [do otherwise] but participate in European developments, but we must link Greece with European civilisation...when faced with the antisocial features of globalisation, we have the responsibility of rendering Greece the centre of education and civilisation, aspiring, thus, towards a Europe against the dehumanising consequences of current developments with respect to humanity and equality.”<sup>15</sup>

Even though, thus, Bologna reforms are presented in official discourse as a process inherently linked with the Greek past and necessary for the country’s future, governments have so far failed in convincing the Greek public about any attempt to privatise and commercialise education, which traditionally has a public nature.

### **Public nature of education as a core element of national identity**

In effect, since World War II and especially after the restoration of democracy in 1974, free access to tertiary education changed the social stratification of the country and contributed to gradually transforming Greece into a modernised European country. According to the 1975 Greek constitution, the state is responsible for providing free education, and thus public universities are inherently linked with contemporary national identity, and they represent the opportunities for upward social mobility, equality and justice. Against this background, reforms echoing the spirit of the Bologna Process were perceived as attacks against social equality and justice, driven by market forces, leading to months of anti-government and anti-globalisation manifestations and public strikes in Greece.

To begin with, in policy documents there is consistent reference to what renders Greek education ‘unique’ in Europe, and education a ‘public good’, offered free to all students irrespectively. Greece has the highest participation ratio in higher education in Europe, with 58 per cent, as EUROSTAT reported in 2002. As Minister of Education Efthimiou proudly noted (2001),

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<sup>15</sup>Inaugural speech for the ‘Dialogue for Education’, 21 January 2011, [http://kapodistriako.uoa.gr/stories/print.php?id=060\\_co\\_01](http://kapodistriako.uoa.gr/stories/print.php?id=060_co_01)

“We are ahead of countries such as Germany and Italy that have been serving as points of reference concerning their university system, or even Sweden, the country with the most functional welfare state in Europe!”<sup>16</sup>

In the course of all interviews, the large majority of non-state actors, as well as lay people, exclusively concentrated on the issue of the privatisation of education thus highlights the centrality of free education in national discourse. More specifically, individuals reacted promptly when hearing the term ‘privatisation’, and there was a broad consensus running across different political affiliations, backgrounds and ages that public education is an inherent national good. The proposed reforms put forward by the governments were rejected as inappropriate for the Greek situation and threatening to certain core values that they hold dear (i.e., social equality and justice, potential for upward social mobility).

Moreover, the Bologna reforms were perceived as a ‘modernisation’ project that state actors authoritatively imposed upon citizens, not because of its positive connotation, but because of the fears of sanctions and of the anxiety of lagging behind others. As even the President of ESYP noted,

“Europe produces regulations that seem to be coming from abroad and that actually remain detached from our society...Europe functions in a top-down way and is populated by individuals who are not related with its social base.”<sup>17</sup>

As a result, the educational reforms that were initiated in 2000 ended up denoting something more than their original content and gradually functioned as a ‘frame of protest’ for a broader opposition against an ‘externally imposed’ ‘new model of life’ that was threatening all the ‘achievements of modernity’ and that would bear all the ‘sad consequences of privatisation, globalisation and abrupt authoritarianism’. As evident mainly through non-state actors’ interviews, by 2007 ‘Bologna’ had managed to fabricate an oppositional discourse against ‘modernisation’ by merging patterns of oppositional tactics and accumulated youth anxieties. According to the students interviewed, what was expressed through this protest was disillusionment, and a generalised feeling that “We cannot bear it anymore, someone had to

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<sup>16</sup> ‘What kind of reform does National Education need?’, *Vima*, 10 March 2006, <http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=2&artid=171883&ct=6&dt=12/03/2006>

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Thanos Veremis, op cit

win, we would be the first generation since 1974 with worse prospects of life and labour than our parents.” Also in the case of lay people, there was a broad consensus running across different political affiliations, backgrounds and ages that public education is an inherent national good, which in most cases must be defended. When referring to ‘free education’ people spoke of their relations with state representatives, equality, quality of life and everything that might risk what they perceive as democratic values.

### **Seeking alternative paths to modernity beyond public/private**

State discourse on Bologna remains trapped within the modernity/tradition dilemma, equating on the one hand educational reforms with a modernisation project coming from abroad that the country must follow so as to catch up with the rest, while on the other castigating national elements as responsible for delays, shortcomings and embarrassments. Non-state actors interviewed appeared rather confident as to what they opposed, mainly the neo-liberal restructuring of education and life in general, however, less sure as to what they defended. All interviewees acknowledged that Greek universities are introverted, centralised and ruled by political patronage, and thus in desperate need of change. The majority, however, were perplexed as to what direction this change should take; public education had to be protected, but not in its current form; the Bologna Process was to be avoided, yet reforms were necessary in order to secure the country’s participation in the global scene. As the priest responsible for the Youth section of the Metropolitan area of Attica noted,

“Things have to change; we cannot ignore the globalised tendency of intensification of studies, but we cannot let ourselves be influenced by the market only.”<sup>18</sup>

In a similar vein, lay people, even if they positioned themselves as pro- or against- Bologna, proved in the course of discussion to be ambivalent or reluctant when having to choose between the two:

“It is a double-edged sword...in the past, one was going to the university so as to develop his/her critical thinking...now, on the one hand, there are highly skilled

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Priest Antonios Kalligeris, Head of Youth Department of Archdiocese of Athens, 01 July 2010, Athens

persons whose thinking is one-sided, but, on the other, there is the danger of unemployment; I don't know how we can solve this.”<sup>19</sup>

Another person wonders why it is impossible to link the labour market with Universities while maintaining their public nature. Why should we equate this prospect with the privatisation of education? Furthermore, an opinion shared by other respondents is to support a public university adapted to contemporary needs.

Lay people's opinions on tertiary education reforms depart from the dilemma between 'modernity' – as this was proposed by the Bologna Process - and 'tradition'- the current state of affairs in the Greek public universities as this had been framed by both state and non-state actors. In effect, they move beyond this bipolar dilemma. Most interviewees do not perceive free education to be a pre-modern characteristic of the Greek state that has impeded reforms - as official discourse has implicitly or explicitly proclaimed; rather, they consider the public nature of *morfosi* and *paideia* (both translated as education) a core and modern value that must be defended. What is certain is that there is an effort to link free education with the gains attained through a more rational and modernised educational system, without necessarily fitting everything within the politicised 'public/national- private/European' bipolarity.

## **Turkey: Internationalisation vs. Europeanisation**

Turkey officially joined the Bologna Process in 2001. The Bologna Process has a great impact on higher education policy in Turkey and on the course and programme structures at both state and foundation universities.<sup>20</sup> The mobility factor affects higher education considerably.<sup>21</sup> The Bologna Process is an important reflection of liberalisation and globalisation in the field of Turkish higher education. On the structural level, Turkey has been efficient in fulfilling the requirements of the Process. In that regard, the director of a centre working on equal access to education and former rector of a prominent public university emphasised that in his personal experiences with the implementation of the structural reforms, he has not come across challenges but rather observed supplementary additions to the existing

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with M. (male), 34 years old, social worker, 11 January 2011, Athens

<sup>20</sup> Bilkent University was established in 1984 as Turkey's first non-profit foundation university. Although the number of universities had risen significantly, they were not able to satisfy the growing demand (Bayrakdar, 2006:189). Foundation universities, which were organised in accordance with the 1991 Reform Act on Foundation Universities, were planned to fill the gap in the supply side of university education.

<sup>21</sup> For further discussion on the Bologna Process and Turkey see Mızıkacı (2003, 2005), and Erçetin (2006).

structure.<sup>22</sup> He attributed the lack of challenges to the “American model”, which was implemented in Turkey in the 1950s. In that regard, he also noted that the educational system in Europe utilises the “American model” as a benchmark, thus being complementary to the institutional structure in Turkish universities.

Maja Stolle (2009) has revealed in her study that the idea of Europeanisation triggered a wide range of mobility initiatives in Turkish universities and forced them to professionalise the organisation of student mobility. Nevertheless, the motives behind the Bologna Process have been called into question in Turkey. Most significantly, the rise of Euroscepticism has encouraged the policy makers to frame the Bologna Process in terms of globalisation and internationalisation rather than of Europeanisation. Özge Onursal draws attention to the discursive shift in Turkish higher education circles with regard to the promotion of the Bologna Process due to both rising Euroscepticism and the stretching of the Bologna space. She states that the term Europeanisation has now been hijacked by the term internationalisation, and that rectors prefer to use a discourse underlining that “the Bologna Process is designed to create world citizens” instead of saying “European citizens”.<sup>23</sup>

There are arguments which emphasise that the Bologna Process is based on neo-liberal motivations and that the process is in fact market-driven, thereby leading to concerns regarding the quality of education.<sup>24</sup> In order to understand the significance of the terminology, we should note that under the Justice and Development Party (JDP), Turkey has become more active in establishing relations with regional actors, while growing emphasis has been placed on multilateral relations with actors from the Middle East, Africa, the Caucasus, Central Asian Republics and Russia. Subsequently, we can observe that the EU is not perceived as the sole anchor anymore.

Turkey has recently been tempted to increase its authority as a pivotal power in the region. Its changing role in the region, specifically in the Arab world, is mainly shaped by the various kinds of drives it embraces: a) its political drive, made obvious by Erdoğan’s discourse on the Palestinian issue and AKP’s gradual distancing from Israel; b) its cultural-religious drive,

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<sup>22</sup> Personal interview, Istanbul, 5 February 2010

<sup>23</sup> Personal interview with Özge Onursal, Istanbul, 5 March 2010. Özge Onursal is writing her PhD on the Europeanisation of Turkish Higher Education at Istanbul Bilgi University.

<sup>24</sup> There are several scholars in Turkey who explicitly oppose the Bologna Process. See the Anti-Bologna Blog, <http://anti-bologna.blogspot.com/>

visible in AKP's cultural-religious affinity with the Arab world rather than the Kemalist laicists; c) its economic drive, springing from the willingness of AKP's electorate and the newly-growing Anatolian bourgeoisie to open up to emerging markets in the Middle East, Africa, the Caucasus, and Central Asia at a time of Euroscepticism, growing since 2005; and d) its transformative drive, or EU anchor, making it appear as a stable, democratic, liberal, peaceful and efficient country (Kirişçi, 2011). Therefore, the term internationalisation is preferred to Europeanisation, since the latter implies an attachment to one particular region. Nevertheless, the concerns over the outcomes of the Process, such as the quality of education and market orientation, are eclipsed by concerns over the structural requirements as well as social and economic problems that prevent students' participation in the Process.

One of our interlocutors, a former rector who has taken an active part in the Bologna Process, drew attention to the bureaucratic aspect of the Bologna Process, and stated that he does not appreciate the level of bureaucracy at universities in that they have to deal with the government bureaucracy, and that the Process might lead to an international bureaucracy. Nevertheless, he indicated that the Process is indeed a process of Europeanisation.<sup>25</sup>

In line with the financial concerns regarding the Process which were emphasized by the Bologna Process National Reports of 2004-2005 and 2007-2009, the main issue in terms of education is whether it is a public or a private good. This is a subject that has been discussed extensively with regard to the proliferation of foundation universities and the differences in the quality of education. As such, our research indicated that the proliferation of foundation universities contributes to debates on whether education is a private or a public good. It was argued that while foundation universities have been able to integrate their graduates into the labour market, the majority of the state universities were not as successful. Foundation universities are often criticised for having a neoliberal and market-oriented approach, since their networks play an important role in employment opportunities for their graduates. This is a significant issue that has become more visible in the past decade owing to the proliferation of foundation universities.

On 5 April 1991, the National Assembly accepted a new Reform Act on institutions of higher education established by foundations. The rise of foundation universities was welcomed in

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<sup>25</sup> Personal interview, Istanbul, 10 February 2010.

parallel with the changing attitudes towards private ownership of universities. The main rationale of the Reform Act was to integrate industry and universities through the establishment of foundation universities as well as to increase the university education supply for the growing number of high school graduates. Despite the fact that foundation universities only recruit less than 10 % of the overall university-level student population, they have managed to attract good quality academics from public universities. The Reform Act has also paved the way for the opening of some foundation universities critical of the conventional Kemalist ideology in a way that promotes Islamist ideology. As Islam has undeniably become visible in all spheres of Turkish political life since the early 1990s, the headscarf issue and the issue of Imam Hatip High school graduates' entry into University entrance exams and access to higher education without any restrictions regarding their department preferences have become very pivotal issues in Turkey. These debates have coincided with the secularist/Islamist divide in Turkey, which has become even more apparent as the European integration process deepened after the 1999 Helsinki Summit of the European Union.

In accordance with the 1991 University Act on Foundation Universities, the numbers of foundation universities have increased significantly; the numbers were: 1 in 1984, 3 in 1993, 8 in 1996, 15 in 1997, 20 in 1999, 25 in 2006 and 30 in 2007, and 45 in 2010 (<http://www.yok.gov.tr>). Nevertheless, there is a visible inequality in the distribution of students, in that 40% of the students are registered in the following four universities: Yeditepe (Istanbul), Bilkent (Ankara), Başkent (Ankara), Istanbul Bilgi University (Istanbul). While in some foundation universities the ratio of teaching staff per student is closer to that of the public universities, the overall difference in the ratio between public and foundation universities explains why some foundation universities are preferred by the applicants. Accordingly, the preference rates are indicative of the quality of education as well. In terms of academic publications, foundation universities are the top four universities in general, while six foundation universities have been placed in the top ten with regards to the publications per person (YÖK, 2007).

### **The Bologna Process and skill-based education**

The harmonisation efforts proposed by the Bologna Process are not just about Europe but rather about Europe's aim to become a stronger force in the process of globalisation (Blitz, 2009; and Keeling, 2006). As such, internationalisation of education, among other policies, is often perceived as a reflection of the influence of global forces on domestic policies. James

and Mok (2003) provide a definition of internationalisation which can be applicable to the Turkish case.<sup>26</sup> As we have seen in the case of the University Act of 1933, with the formation of Istanbul University, the main goal of the new higher education system was to model Turkish education after its counterparts in Europe. As it was apparent in Öncü (1993) and Dölen (2009)'s works, the Turkish model was supported with the involvement of foreign professors from Germany, France and England, and in the 1950s with the rise of the American aspirations. In parallel, while the proliferation of foundation universities had already intensified the use of English in education, some state universities even began teaching in English.

In regards to the widely acknowledged debates on the neoliberal nature of the Process, ÜE (a former Rector) stated: "I agree with the criticisms of the process with regards to neoliberal motivations. If skill-based education is accentuated, then higher education will resemble occupational schools".<sup>27</sup> Similarly, KÇ (a sociologist), who referenced the importance of local characteristics, argued that:

"In terms of the arguments regarding the Bologna Process being skill-based, I think that if the mentality behind the process begins to obliterate local characteristics then there might be a problem. Nevertheless, this process exists independent of the Bologna Process as well. Also, the things that we designate as skills change rapidly. For example, once we used to teach the IT students MS-DOS systems, which became obsolete upon their graduation. I think it's more important to relay a more critical perspective".<sup>28</sup>

On this issue, GO, former chairperson of a women's association and a member of the CHP, emphasised a very important aspect of skill-based education that is also a vulnerability of this system. She stated that:

"it is often the case that [skill-based] education does not support a critical mind. In effect, skills are like Word or Excel, the philosophy is the Windows operating system.

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<sup>26</sup> Alternative definitions of the internationalisation process are available in Mzikacı (2005)'s article.

<sup>27</sup> Personal interview with ÜE, Istanbul, 5 February 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Personal interview with KÇ, Istanbul, 12 February 2010

Without a philosophical foundation, the system will always send off an error. Actually, philosophy is a dimension that extends through everyone”.<sup>29</sup>

The interlocutors have provided an array of answers as to whether they would consider the Bologna Process “Europeanisation” or “internationalisation”. While the interlocutors were divided in terms of their reflections on the framework of the Process, standardisation is often perceived to be problematic. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the majority of the interlocutors indicated that this Process is not well known in Turkey.

The lack of information on the Bologna Process contributes to the ways in which the interlocutors were unable to comment on the correlation between the Process and the notions of modernity and modernisation. However, after describing the Process with particular emphasis on much-criticised skill-based orientation vis-a-vis the market orientation of the Process, it is possible to argue that those who have an educational or professional background in engineering (forestry, metallurgy, agriculture and the like) have analysed skill-based education as a positive feature. Some of the interlocutors perceived the Process and market orientation to be positive and argued that in general, the high level of unemployment in certain sectors is due to the graduates’ lack of skills.

On the other hand, some other interlocutors took a critical position vis-a-vis the skill-based characteristics of the Bologna Process. BB framed this Process within the realm of capitalist motivations and the interests of companies, and stated that:

“I think this is about capitalism; they want a productive individual rather than a thinking one. It is about profits. A worker on a ship knows more than I do. Our system is based on memorisation, we don’t get to practice. I am an engineer but I have no practice”.<sup>30</sup>

There were also arguments that criticised the ways in which this Process might hinder individuals’ outlooks on the world. These individuals were mainly in the 40-65 age brackets and with backgrounds in social studies. MY stated that:

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<sup>29</sup> Personal interview with GO, Istanbul, 15 February 2010

<sup>30</sup> Personal interview with BB, Istanbul, 25 February 2010

“...I think an engineer with no understanding of the world is not a good engineer. Skill-based education is acceptable for vocational schools, but a person should be equipped to face the world when s/he graduates from a University”.<sup>31</sup>

The interlocutors indicated that they have a general distrust in the current higher education system *vis-a-vis* the YÖK's (Higher Education Council) top-down approach and the reformation process. BK argued that the system is “overwhelmed with reforms” and the “rationale” of the Bologna Process has been omitted in relaying the necessary reforms. Nevertheless, in terms of the higher education system, our findings have not yielded sufficient information to generalise private individuals' perceptions towards the notions of modernisation in terms of the Bologna Process.

The Bologna Process seems to be far from institutionalisation, as it is still being undertaken by volunteering individuals who have internalised it. The Bologna offices of each university are often run by those individuals who are very supportive of the process. However, their hard work is not accompanied by the institutionalisation of the process. On the other hand, the skill-based nature of the Bologna Process has been criticised by the interlocutors, as it aims to create skilled individuals who are equipped to fulfil the requirements of the global economic forces in a way that leads to a kind of dehumanisation of individuals. Besides, the interlocutors also addressed the negative aspects of standardisation and homogenisation of higher education in Europe as leading to the disappearance of local features. On the other hand, equating the Bologna Process with the Americanisation of higher education, one of the interlocutors rightfully indicated that Turkey is by default very well prepared for the main rationale of the Bologna Process as most of the Turkish universities, be they public or foundation, have been designed in accordance with the American university structure. There is recently anecdotal but limited evidence that some European universities are addressing the academic sources in Turkish universities to compensate for their lack of resources with regard to teaching in English as a foreign language.

It is possible to observe that modern education and/or modernisation of education is often discussed with reference to the USA by the interlocutors in the 20-45 age bracket. As previously indicated, these references appear to be both positive and negative. Nonetheless,

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<sup>31</sup> Personal interview with MY, Istanbul, 27 February 2010.

the American model introduced in the 1950s still constitutes an important element in individuals' opinions towards the higher education system in Turkey. We argue that the way in which the Bologna Process, as the most comprehensive and recent attempt to Europeanise the system, is framed as "internationalisation" contributes to the lack of information on the influence of Europe *vis-a-vis* modernity. In that regard, while Westernisation and Europeanisation can be used interchangeably to refer to the modernisation of Turkey, we find that "Americanisation" as a source of standardisation is also an important element of the Turkish education system.

## **Croatia: neo-liberal critique and identity projections<sup>32</sup>**

Croatia signed the Bologna declaration in 2001 with a consensus of all political parties, and the implementation began in 2005. The reasoning behind the signing of the Bologna declaration was a quest for modernisation of education to make it more European-oriented. The education system was presented as old-fashioned due to the overthrown Communist system although this is not true, because Croatia has had a problem with the education system since the time of Roy Mažuranić, who wanted to change and Europeanise the Croatian education system in 1873 and 1874.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the problems appeared well before the second Yugoslavia that enforced communist rule.

The Croatian education system was very theory-oriented. The main criticism was directed towards the workload the students had to carry during their studies, as well as towards the discrepancy between what the students study and what they are expected to do once they are employed in the labour market. This means that students were not equipped with the

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<sup>32</sup> The first version of the Croatian part of the paper has been presented at CES' conference under the title 'Bologna as Europeanization and Modernization' held in June 2011 in Barcelona, Spain. The second version has been presented at the ESA conference in Geneva, Switzerland, in September 2011 under the title 'Bologna changes between national and European: Lessons from Croatia' (co-written by M. Topić and S. Rodin).

<sup>33</sup> Actually, "the only attempt of modernizing society in the period of determining Croatian national identity can be attributed to the Roy Mažuranić who tried to enforce liberal reforms following the European paths. These reforms, however, served as a means of founding statehood and creating Croatian national identity. Thus, the attempt for modernizing the institutions started in 1848 and this was the beginning of founding of the statehood idea and in 1873 and 1874 Roy Mažuranić thus enforced reforms in the system of education and governing. These reforms are considered to be the foci of modernization that was in line with Europe and that presented a step forward towards creating a stronger national identity. These reforms were also seen as a step forward towards joining the European civilization circle (Čepulo, 2000; 2002). The identity creation process through education was also presented in a decision to place Croatian language in schools as mandatory (Čepulo, 2002). These policies failed after Roy Mažuranić left his position when Hungarian Roy Khuen Héderváry took his place and enforced absolutist rule" (Topić, 2011: 4, Word version).

necessary skills to find jobs in the market, because their knowledge was purely theoretical. Additionally, the higher education system was criticised because of the lack of discussions in classes and the lack of learning how to write academic papers that affected the ability of students to successfully enter academia and perform well from their academic beginnings. Furthermore, the Croatian education system was also criticised in the sense that it was not designed to pursue critical thinking and self-reflexivity but rather passive observance (Topić and Vasiljević 2011; Topić and Vasiljević 2011a). Additionally, Bologna changes brought harmonisation with the European education framework that was meant to ensure recognition and mobility within Europe, as explained at the beginning of the paper.

The change the Bologna declaration was meant to bring to the Croatian education system was presented as a step forward towards Europeanisation in terms of the modernisation that the education system was meant to achieve, but also in terms of how the Croat of the future should be educated. In this sense, the new system of higher education was meant to decrease study groups so that students could concentrate on discussions and papers as well as practical work that would give them the necessary competencies for future prospects. This was well received by all political parties as well as the wider public, who always agreed that education was unnecessarily difficult and eventually useless for being successful in the job market. The framing of the signing of the Bologna declaration was then connected with maintaining Croatia's European identity, which needed to be strengthened further. This is again coming from the historical discourse of Europeanism that is supposedly being oppressed, although Croatia unquestionably belongs to Europe, to which it needs to return, as it is enforced (Topić et al, 2009). The issue of Croatia's tradition and the quest for modernisation always ruled the public and political discourse, and present Croatian politics is, mostly, in line with those earlier policies (Topić, 2011 a). Modernisation has always been perceived to be necessary to Europeanise Croatia, but it has always failed. Then the constant equation does not change: when modernisation fails, Europeanisation fails too.

According to the critiques, the implementation of the Bologna Process started too early without proper preparation, unlike its neighbouring country, Slovenia, which implemented it in stages, the last one being completed in 2008. When student protests broke out in spring 2009, the criticism was primarily directed towards the neo-liberal nature of the Bologna Process in the sense that this new system is commercialising education. This is to say that Bologna is perceived to be bringing about divisions and differences between rich and poor

while at the same time undermining the quality of education. Bologna is therefore perceived as neo-liberalism, which has a negative connotation in Croatia.

It was the international student protests that fuelled protests in Croatia (Mesić, 2009), and the students deployed a kind of critique borrowed from Saint Simone, calling the government a *parasite that governs the majority* (Fiamengo, 1987). This was the fall of the modernisation of education that triggered further Eurosceptic sentiments in a way that reaffirmed the historical equation, meaning that the failure of modernisation brings about the failure of Europeanisation. This is the case with the student population that eventually made an attempt to spread the protests to the larger societal segments to oppose modernisation and Europeanisation along with other domestic policies. This attempt failed, but the protests did occur and the Euroscepticism did increase, although not only because of the anti-Bologna protests but also because of the reluctance of the EU to admit Croatia to the Union and the general social-political climate in the country (Eurobarometer 71).

One of the reasons that the public did not entirely support the students lies in the fact that the former system allowed long-term studying whereas the new one decreased the years of study. At the same time, the public did support the students in the quest for free education, but when the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports offered only the first year to be entirely free for everyone and the following years to be paid according to the GPA, the public shifted its support from the students and left them unsupported, which is why the protests had no chance to continue reaching out to the wider society.

The changes made in the course of time following the Bologna Process have not been supported by most of the stakeholders, such as the NGOs, students, academics and administrators. NGO actors tend to express a criticism of Bologna through the lack of competence and interest on the part of officials to enforce a proper reform that would enforce modernisation and Europeanisation, as it was prolonged:

“...the Bologna Process is understood in a completely different way. The competitiveness does not rely on the name of the degree but on a competitive knowledge. If we look at our literature, which is old and needs to be updated, professors who still teach the same things, reading the old books, students who are not motivated and are still only passive listeners without any practical experience, we need

to declare the breakdown of the Bologna Process. (...) I think that the state has the status of being more traditional than modern. The traditional heritage is always in the first plan and every process of reform is somehow slowed down by some traditional point of view. I think that politicians are responsible for the current state of mind in our country” (FP/ZGS-2, Jewish minority representative).<sup>34</sup>

Student representatives, on the other hand, believe that the Croatian study programme is not suitable for Bologna reforms due to the differences between the Western and Croatian systems:

“In Croatia we had a different education system. The Bologna Process is a completely new process, a positive change, but it seems to me it is mostly inspired by the Anglo-Saxon education system. It seems as if their model has just been copied to our system, while it is so much different”.<sup>35</sup>

Another student whom we interviewed similarly refers to the differences between the Croatian higher education tradition and the European tradition:

“I think it is more in accordance with the American system. I also believe that standardising and evaluating national education is going to be a huge job because we are all so different. I don't think it's going to happen overnight. I think it's going to need at least 20-30 years”.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, lay people differ in their views in terms of whether they are involved in the education process or not. In that sense, there is a general consensus that Bologna is poorly implemented but the views on Bologna differ on the issue of what Bologna represents and how and whether this should be enforced. In this regard, the national minorities see Bologna through the traditional Croatian conflict of traditional and modern:

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<sup>34</sup> We conducted 12 interviews with NGO actors and 29 interviews with lay people in Croatia. Interviews were conducted in the period from November 2010 until February 2011. All interviews were transcribed for analysis and the discourse has been analysed using the approach of Ruth Wodak and Teun Van Dijk. For more information see Topić and Vasiljević 2011 and Topić and Vasiljević 2011 a. Interview quoted in reference No. 34 was conducted on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Personal interview with a student, Zagreb, 10th September 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Personal interview with another student, Zagreb, 8th September 2010.

“I think that the state has the status of more traditional than modern. That is the current state of mind in Croatia. We aspire more to patriarchy, tradition, and even conservative. Great impact on it has, above all, the Church, that equates faith with the people belonging to all their religious views. I believe that tradition should be nourished in terms of language, script, culture, but the officials are under the framework of tradition still trying to put a lifestyle”.<sup>37</sup>

Students are looking at Bologna through its implementation and the problems it is causing them during their studies, whereas professors and teachers look at Bologna through the poor equipment and funding they have at their disposal for providing a good education:

“...Regardless of accepting the National Curriculum and rejection of the Croatian National Educational Standard, everything is still very similar and dependent on professors and their ways of shaping the classes. All theoretical issues that were meant to help us in implementation are still not enforced. We know that Croatian schools are poorly equipped; we know that in rural areas classes are still held in a front of a fire where pupils have to put the wood every two hours, etc. Everything is still up to the professors”.<sup>38</sup>

Some students perceive the Bologna Process optimistically, as they believe that it will challenge the old education system based on memorizing. However, they are still not satisfied with the reform, as it has not yet brought about a change in the mindset of the students:

“I think Bologna is a positive thing. But I also think that at certain faculties students are still left by themselves and that certain exams should be divided into smaller themes so that studying could be made easier. Students should also be included in studying, in debates and discussions, and not just made to apprehend and reproduce the material”.<sup>39</sup>

Another student is also rather sceptical about the way the Bologna reform has so far been implemented by the national authorities:

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<sup>37</sup> Personal interview with a Serbian minority representative, Zagreb, 3rd October 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Personal interview with a professor of Croatian language and culture, *Zagreb, January 2011*.

<sup>39</sup> Personal interview with a student, Zagreb, December 2010.

“...I think Bologna is a good thing, just that it has been implemented badly here. Nobody here deals with it too much, they just implanted it and now they expect everyone to adjust to it in a way that best fits everyone”.<sup>40</sup>

### **Education as an instrument for enforcing (what is perceived to be) the national**

In Croatia, modernisation is generally seen as equal to Europeanisation. This also relates to the education process, which is seen as traditional rather than modern. This is why the Bologna reform was first welcomed by the public. However, the student protests of 2009 and onwards showed that, after a couple of years of implementation, students stepped out in favour of tradition because of the poor implementation of Bologna. This, in the public sphere, has often been connected with tradition as such, a notion often seen in the media as well as in the wider public.

Analysis of the policy documents shows that the state participates in the enforcement of the dichotomy between tradition and modernisation in relating it with Europe. In this sense, the policy research of education-related documents proves that the legal system enforces both European and national discourses. The main discursive *topoi* that runs through the documents is that Croatia should enforce European-oriented education with a goal to establish European citizenship for the future of the united Europe. However, at the same time, policy documents strongly enforce what is national through the insistence on preserving the national when Croatia joins the EU, i.e. culture, tradition, national identity and the Croatian language (Rodin et al, 2010).

The discourse of traditional versus modern appears here through the presentation of European as modern in regard to the teaching techniques, whereas the national appears as traditional that needs to be replaced by the modern, but then again it has to be preserved. This is one of the critiques made against the officials, and also the issue that presents an obstacle to the enforcement of the envisaged Europeanisation. Therefore, when it comes to the state, the emphasis in primary education is on the control of the content that is serving to preserve what is national, whereas with higher education the emphasis is on the control of the implementation that is preserving the traditional. In this sense, the state clearly acts in favour

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<sup>40</sup> Personal interview with a student, Zagreb, January 2011.

of national and traditional packed within the European. In some cases, the policy documents precisely state that the preservation of the national is a European tradition (e.g. National Curriculum).

However, what also needs to be noted is that the non-state actors (NGO, students, lay people) express views that are against the state. Non-state actors criticize the Bologna Process but at the same time they criticize the old system, too. This is why the student protests ended up looking as if they were acting in favour of the traditional, although students are simply facing obstacles in their study processes and in that sense protest against the Bologna Process:

“The protests were indeed in favour of tradition. The students protested because nobody explained to them what they should expect of the new system. What was a rule for one generation did not apply for the next one. (...) The protests are not a result of the economic crisis, because they began before the peak of the crisis. They are more the result of the identity crisis because the education system was changed to the core. The identity of academic society has changed. The protests were not exclusively connected to this, but they had much more to do with the identity crisis than with the economic crisis. Overnight, the education system changed to its roots. The change did not come from within the society, but was imposed from outside, so it caused disorder. The autonomy of the University has been largely affected. The students were not so much aware of this, but the professors were, and I hold it against them that they weren't involved in the protest”.<sup>41</sup>

When asked about modernisation of education, students express support; when asked about regular (weekly) reading assignments, the students express dissatisfaction; when asked about the old system that had no weekly assignments but a massive workload examined at the end of the academic year, they oppose that, too. Apparently, the Bologna reform was not well prepared in advance and the problem is in the current state of mind in Croatia expressed at all levels, as already noted by the national minorities:

“I think that Bologna in Croatia has been introduced too early without adequate preparation so that students could completely use all the advantages that Bologna

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<sup>41</sup> Personal interview with a student, Zagreb, 10th September 2010.

offers. Additionally, there is also a problem of adjustment of the professors to a new way of teaching, especially because of the older ones, as well as the impossibility of qualitative teaching because of large study groups”.<sup>42</sup>

Additionally, similar to the Greek case, the discourses indicate that there is confusion about the Bologna Process. It seems that there is a general consensus among the stakeholders that Bologna is eventually good, but poorly managed and entirely inappropriate for the Croatian education system. Also similar to the Greek case, the modernity/tradition dilemma appears in the same way because Bologna is seen as Europeanisation and modernisation; but when something goes wrong, then national actors are blamed, such as the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports as well as the University and academics. Yet, it is the European project in general that is being criticised because the EU is seen as imposing this reform on Croatia.

It also seems that the actors are only concise when it comes to the privatisation of education, but when it comes to the reform of higher education, they oppose it with no clear agenda. The difference in the attitudes of the non-state actors towards various issues regarding the Bologna Process leads us to conclude that the actors oppose the Bologna Process as a means of expressing their dissatisfaction with Croatian politics in general and with the process of European integration in particular, a process which they believe is being imposed on them by the state.

## **Conclusion**

The three cases scrutinized in this paper have clearly shown that the Bologna Process is an insightful area in which to conduct a comparative study. The Bologna Process, as part of the ongoing reforms of higher education in Europe over the last decade, reconfirmed the role of Universities as a central institution in the ‘Europe of knowledge’. With the creation of the European Higher Education Area, the EU and national state actors have lately become engaged in transforming the University into an object of European-level policy making. More specifically, those policies denote a shift over the policy paradigm of higher education in accordance with the changed context of the so-called post-industrial society. Their

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<sup>42</sup> Personal interview with a student, Zagreb, February 2011.

implementation made Higher Education responsible for helping individuals in the knowledge-based economy, contributing to their adaptability and employability.

Departing from the theory of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt, 2000), the Identities and Modernities in Europe (IME) project focuses on conflictual events, and analyzes the relevant discourses produced at the levels of official policy making, non-state actors, civil society representatives and lay people. Identity formation and higher education are not presented as top-down processes and, at the same time, research on those issues avoids being disconnected from broader developments and reforms. Greek, Turkish and Croatia cases revealed that there may be different ways in which tradition vs. modernity have emerged in relation to 'Europe', Americanisation, the nation and neo-liberalism. There may be several reasons, of course, leading to the emergence of these different manifestations. It seems that one of the major reasons is related to the earlier paths taken by the respective states with respect to the formation of the higher education institutions during the Cold War years. Apart from this path-dependent kind of manifestation of tradition vs. modernity, one could also refer to the employment of a Eurosceptic discourse by various actors to implicitly express their dissatisfaction about the modernisation, liberalisation and Europeanisation of higher education institutions.

Our joint research on the way Bologna Process has been accommodated, negotiated, debated or rejected in three different European countries sheds light on some remarkable points. In Greece, the public nature of education that offers the possibility to a majority of students to benefit from upward social mobility is considered as a quintessential and integral part of the way the nation is perceived, and, thus, contrasted to the rationale put forward by Bologna reforms. Intense societal tension and mobilisation was raised in Greece against these reforms that were interpreted as market driven and conforming to neo-liberal directives. That was also the case in the other countries under examination, especially in Turkey, where such dissenting voices were coupled with strong feelings of Euroscepticism and anti neo-liberalism. Moreover, in Croatia reforms were resisted on behalf of the students as representing market-driven neo-liberal tendencies that hamper the development of traditional aspects of national education. In this respect, Croatian protests are very much related to Greek arguments against reforming higher education: the dichotomy between modernity and tradition represents the national institutions as pre-modern traditions that must be replaced by the modern European

perspectives promoted by the Bologna reforms. However, in both Turkey and Croatia, the protests failed in achieving the larger support of the society and remained within the student body only, despite the efforts of students to spread the protests to the larger society. On the other hand, in Greece opposition to reforms managed to become a ‘frame of protest’ that embraced a broader opposition to a ‘new model of life’ conditioned by competitiveness and entrepreneurship and, thus, attracted mass participation and public legitimation. One of the common denominators of the student protests in all the countries is that the likelihood of the Bologna Process being manipulated by the students to express their opposition to the acting liberal/conservative governments is quite high.

In any case, in all the individual studies examined, Europe and the related University reforms appear to a certain extent as modernisation projects coming from abroad and beyond the nation and its citizens; at the same time, in most cases the Bologna Process is perceived as bringing forward a ‘new model’ aiming at international competitiveness, while the University’s ability to ‘do good’ for society is rather held back. Following the adoption of the Lisbon strategy, externally defined standards and goals, demands for results that can be documented in numbers, flexibility, mobility and external monitoring units contribute to the dominance of the ‘knowledge economy’ over the ‘knowledge society’, while reference to the construction of Europe as a political community and the social cohesion of European societies is absent in European and national state actors’ discourses on the Bologna Process. This becomes an academic endeavour especially urgent nowadays, when the European Union as a whole and public support for its concept and realities are seriously challenged and structurally questioned. Hence, this comparative study reveals that the dichotomy between the national/traditional and the European/advanced/progressive is still at work. We have clearly demonstrated that higher education is an ideal ground to investigate these conflicts between the national and European levels.

Being attentive to the voices and arguments challenging educational reform rhetoric from a comparative perspective allows us to examine the way Europe, modernity and the nation are linked in each nation case forming European identities. We believe that what we have exposed here can be framed as an exercise of self-reflexivity, which is the mark of being modern. As one of the stated objectives of the IME Project is to think about the future trajectory of European identities, we believe that this comparative study provides the policy makers with a set of evidential data to reconsider the ways in which the Bologna Process has

so far been perceived by the non-state actors and private individuals. There are, of course, many unanswered questions, yet our aim is to suggest a possible analytical framework and a way to reflect about Europe that would bring together different national experiences and patterns of behaviour, not only in adopting but also in debating EU reforms.

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