

FMU and the Bologna Declaration: Trends and Tendencies

The *Bologna Declaration*, one of the top current issues in the higher education circles of Europe, sets specific tasks and aims for the educational and national institutions of the signatory countries who require European reasoning and national action.

By adopting the Bologna Declaration, European education began a long and complex process of reform. Its aim is to transform education from a national to a European level. This transformation also functions in completely different socio-economic conditions, such as within the non-EU countries. The extent and state of their being different is not equal in separate countries, however it directly reflects on the tempo and quality of the adoption of the declaration, and thus the tempo of fulfilling the European space of higher education.

The key factors that condition the adoption of the Bologna Declaration are:

- the economy and the level of the living standard;
- the model and the scope of financing higher education;
- the quality of the potential higher educational staff and the appropriate ministries;
- the quality of the study programs;
- technical equipment.

Undoubtedly the future open education market in Europe will feature only those educational institutions:

- whose financing will be based on a defined long-term strategy for the role of education in society;
- who will attract quality teaching staff;
- who will have the financial, technical and staffing capability of creating contemporary, attractive and useful study programs for the education of contemporary profiles demanded by the working force.

Even though the content of the Bologna Declaration is related to the future of European higher education, the desired mobility of students and teachers enabling

them to work and be equally regarded at different higher educational institutions is still the subject of academic dispute.

These disputes are more concerned with the skepticism that these goals will be reached rather than their positive and negative aspects.

This skepticism is mostly supported by the governments' declaratory approach towards the Bologna Declaration (especially in the non-EU countries). These governments usually sign the Declaration with great enthusiasm, but postpone its practice because of other, temporary priorities. Such processes discourage the discredited followers of the Bologna Declaration, but it encourages and strengthens the skeptics.

However, the reason for skepticism is not only the governments' fault, but also lies in:

- the conservative movements in the educational institutions which perceive the changes as an attack on the achieved quality;
- the economic problems – especially in the countries of transition. A variation of this problem concerns the protectionist allocation of funds by departments or the corruption that occurs during allocation. This results in the general tendency of decreasing the budget for education;
- the fear of the institutions and teachers of creating conditions for unloyal competition;
- the unresolved political problems – especially in the Balkans;
- the language barriers;
- the disputes regarding historical events and characters, etc.

As a result, the Macedonian educational institutions, as well as the ones of the neighboring countries, can more easily establish contacts and cooperation with similar but more geographically distant European institutions than establishing cooperation with institutions from the neighboring countries.

The Bologna Declaration and Music higher education

The Bologna Declaration concerns the European music higher education organized in different types of higher education institutions within a complex of a university, or independently.

The older types of music higher education institutions are the Conservatories functioning as music universities and headed by a rector and faculty deans.

The faculties or music academies are music institutions that later became members of the Arts Universities (such as the Art University in Belgrade with Faculties of Music, Visual Art and Drama) or of Universities whose faculties cover both science and art, such as UKIM (The University of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje). The tradition of organizing higher music institutions within the various faculty universities is more common.

The diverse types of music higher education institutions is compensated with the coinciding of curricula, especially concerning the composition and music performance departments, which enhances the mobility of students and the easy recognition of diplomas.

Another mutual point was separating the post-graduate music performance and composition departments into specializations and Master of Arts degrees. Doctoral degrees were planned only for the musicology and ethnomusicology groups.

Such similarities with the music higher education institutions in Europe provided grounds for the adoption and rapid implementation of the Bologna Declaration processes. But in this process music higher education in Europe does not follow the same pace.

The essence of the Bologna Declaration is a credit transfer system to be introduced to all educational institutions. This will provide conditions of mobility, since the national educational system study programs will be recognized abroad.

The discussions of the deans and representatives of the music faculties from the Western Balkans in February 2004 show that in this part of Europe the Bologna process is still in its first steps and the institutions do not approach this task with particular enthusiasm.

At the same time, the credit transfer system was implemented in other parts of Europe (such as the Music University in Dresden, the King's Music College in Stockholm, the Klaipeda Faculty of Arts and other). These institutions initiated cooperation with other institutions and tried to influence their governments into promoting mobility.

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The Faculty of Music (FMU, 1966), member of UKIM-Skopje, is the only higher education music institution in Macedonia which is structured like most of the other European higher education music institutions, including:

- undergraduate, specialization, Master of Arts and Doctoral studies;
- a Department of Pedagogy, Theory, Composition and Conducting, and three departments for Performance of all the symphony orchestra instruments;
- a student symphony and chamber string orchestra;
- two student choirs;
- a big band;
- an institute for audio and video research and archiving of music (IRAM).

The FMU activities have proven that this is not only an educational institution, but also a contemporary artistic and musicological institution of great significance for national music culture overall.

In the Bologna Declaration the Faculty of Music saw a system of providing more improved music education, similar to the ideas and needs of the music artists. In the music circles it has been an unwritten rule for the ambitious musicians, upon graduating from the university, to spend at least a year in another artistic environment, in a different higher education institution before beginning their artistic, teaching or research careers. This rule, analogous to the Bologna idea of academic mobility, is practiced by a number of graduated students who are now esteemed musicians. They usually specialize or earn their MA degree in music institutions in Paris, St. Petersburg, Moscow, London, Prague, Sofia, Belgrade, Hamburg, etc.

The fact that the FMU graduated students continue their post-graduate education in foreign educational institutions shows that the diploma and quality of the FMU studies is recognized abroad. Any further developments that help the recognition of the education process at FMU, such as the credit transfer system and the of the diploma-supplement are desirable.

By 2004, 1569 students completed their undergraduate studies, 106 completed their Master of Arts degrees and 3 students from Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia and Romania earned a PhD degree at the Faculty of Music in Skopje. Today these professional musicians work in the music environments of Macedonia, the countries of former Yugoslavia, but also in France, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, South Africa, Romania, England, Canada, Cyprus and Italy.

In 2002 UKIM organized workshops distributing the instructions for implementing the Bologna Declaration. From 2002 until 2004, FMU professors, associates and administration began studying the Law for Higher Education and the Statute for implementing the Credit Transfer System at UKIM. The Faculty went through a successful process of self-evaluation and external evaluation and is now expecting the document of official accreditation. At the same time a FMU Committee for Producing the Credit Transfer System was formed. This committee completed its task and the proposed credit transfer system now serves as a basis for changing and expanding the FMU study program.

In striving to implement the Bologna model, within the last decade FMU has gradually begun to introduce the projective logic in modeling the curricula. The classes in orchestra, chamber music, composition, conducting and instrument have the goal of presenting the knowledge acquired in class in the concert halls beyond the Faculty, i.e. in front of the Macedonian music audiences, at distinguished festivals such as “Ohrid Summer Festival”, “Days of Macedonian Music”, “Skopje Summer”, “Interfest-Bitola”, solo or in cooperation with the Macedonian Philharmonic or the Macedonian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. The goal of the sonology classes is the audio and video archiving of the Faculty concert production and the digitization of Macedonian cultural heritage. This program also provides Internet access of this material for its many users throughout the world. The results are a large number of recorded audio discs and films in DVD format, enabling the presentation of Macedonian culture outside of Macedonia. It is important to note that the equipment and knowledge required for the institution’s technological leap were provided by the three Tempus projects for developing studies in sonology and multimedia – a new department at FMU.

The projective logic changed the staff policy of the Faculty with the growing participation of several eminent conductors from the country and abroad. These conductors have worked on projects such as concerts of the Symphony Orchestra and the FMU Choir “Dragan Shuplevski”.

Another development at FMU shows that there is an increase of first year students. The number of students has noted a 33% increase from the number in 1992. Above 80% of those graduated in four years, and 20% of them pursued an MA degree at this institution.

Most of the first year students are students who have graduated from the music high schools. In order to make music education accessible to students from other high schools, in 2004 FMU organized classes for those studying for the entrance exams. The percentage of first year candidates who have graduated from non-music schools is expected to rise.

Unfortunately, there have been negative trends during the last years as well:

- the uncertain future of the individual classes that are to be conducted in groups of one to five students according to the Ministry of Education;
- not financing the classes held by part-time employed teachers by the Ministry of Education (this hinders the national quota students to enroll at departments whose subjects are taught by part-time employed teachers in);
- not supplying replacements for the retired teachers, resulting in the doubling of the weekly amount of classes which is not financially supported by the ministry;
- the lack of administration in conditions when according to the Bologna Declaration the administrative work increases.

For FMU and higher education as a whole 2005 will be the year of the completion of the processes and tasks related to the Bologna Declaration. This year also awaits the defining of the interest of the Ministry of Education in how and to which extent it will finance higher education and what the students' participation will be. FMU will have to provide scholarships for the best students, thus motivating the hard working students and searching for its future replacement in the successful ones.

The main goal of FMU in 2005 is to complete the process of change, to enrich the study programs and to admit a new generation of students who will study under the credit transfer system. This is required by all the UKIM and the Ministry of Education acts.

The introduction of the credit transfer system will intensify the established contacts with the London Trinity College of Music, the Koninklijk Music Conservatorium in the Hague, the King's Music College in Stockholm and the Faculty of Music in Nish. The cooperation between FMU and these institutions is at the level of seminars and mutual temporary projects. The opportunity of studying Macedonian folk instruments in Skopje or gaining work experience in well-equipped studios for the processing and archiving of sound is attractive to students outside of

Macedonia, as well. The credit transfer system will make this opportunity more realistic.

What is generally neglected in Macedonian higher education is the education of the graduated and MA students. Their knowledge should be refreshed in various ways in order to help them in the competition on the labor market, which is a new aim in increasing educational supply.

In 2005 the practice of projects continues. The FMU ensemble concerts are already planned. These enrich the increasingly poor Skopje concert life. Many of them are going to be recorded and placed on the Faculty web-site, which is probably the only one of the kind in the country, and is visited very often.

In its past and current work FMU has included activities covered in the Bologna Declaration. The year that follows is a year in which we will promote these activities to musicians over Europe as interesting and useful for their careers.