In this paper I have a closer look at the latest developments in the transformation of higher education that was set in motion by the pan-European Bologna Process of 1999 and the related research aspects of the European Union’s Lisbon Strategy for jobs and economic growth of 2000. In both cases the European Commission is a main player. The results of both developments should worry political scientists, because of the impact on their discipline.

Time to Revisit the Bologna Process

As a scholar at a Dutch university I have followed the government’s higher education policies, as these have kept changing and impacting academia. They have seriously influenced teaching, research and management, not the least through financial cutbacks and the introduction of new ways of teaching and new procedures for the organization of research. The Bologna Process of 1999 added a multilateral dimension to these government policies.

Since the 1980s I had sent students abroad for both internships, in international organizations in particular, and study at a foreign university, based on bilateral agreements and supported by a university fund. During the 1990s students began to also use the financial and other resources of some action schemes for the mobility of university students, set up by the European Commission, to be known as the Erasmus Programme (1987-1994) and the Socrates Programme (which includes parts of the Erasmus Programme; since 1995). Sending students to the United States was supported by the American International Students Exchange Program (ISEP) and academic teacher exchange with the US took place through the American Fulbright Program. The Socrates programme also facilitated teacher exchange, both in European Union member states and in some non-EU countries. Another European dimension was the creation of courses on European integration, financially supported by the 1990 Jean Monnet Action, which has also established so-called Jean Monnet Chairs. During the 1990s ‘internationalization’ became more and more important in Dutch higher education and my faculty board asked me to structure our internationalization activities for students and staff and set up an International Office. One day in 1999 I was surprised by a piece of paper of two pages with a ‘declaration’ about a ‘Bologna Process’. Having read this document I was convinced that it was to influence European higher education gravely, but many colleagues to whom I showed it would not believe this.

As a member of the Executive Council of the European Political Science Network epsNet I began to better understand the pan-European Bologna Process and its impact and I published a book (together with Ewa Kulesza) and two articles on this mechanism to harmonize Europe’s higher education systems, not by creating the same higher education...
system but by providing instruments which make it easier for individuals to move from one country or education system to another. The book was published in 2005, the articles in 2008 (Reinalda and Kulesza 2006; Reinalda 2008; Reinalda 2008). After the publication of the articles I did not follow the Bologna Process in detail, but now in 2011 it seems useful to revisit it in order to assess its progress and success, as its aim was to create a European Area of Higher Education by 2010. The publications traced the Bologna Process in general, but also focussed on its impact on, and answer by, political science as a discipline.

The Bologna Process can be seen as both a transformation process of European higher education and an international political institution, together with other international organizations, among them the European Union, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

The Bologna Process as a Transformation Process of Higher Education

The problems that some states in Western Europe were experiencing in their education systems in the 1990s were the background of the Bologna Process. Shifts in the structure of the international education market along neoliberal ideas were part of this background (Reinalda and Kulesza 2006: 11-15). The educational systems of some West-European countries were regarded as expensive and inflexible and reform proposals in France had met with serious resistance. An invitation by the French Minister of Education, Claude Allègre, to his British, German and Italian colleagues resulted in a declaration issued during a celebration at the Sorbonne University in Paris in May 1998. This *Sorbonne Declaration* meant to increase mobility and cooperation between European universities. It was followed by a mobilization campaign by high civil servants of the four Ministries and in June 1999 the Ministers of Education of 29 European countries (15 EU and 14 non-EU members) convened in Bologna, Italy, in a follow-up meeting and issued a joint declaration. By accepting this *Bologna Declaration* the countries committed themselves to the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as a key to promoting citizens’ mobility and employability and the continent’s overall development. Their higher education institutions committed themselves by taking a major role in constructing this European ‘area’.

The decision of the four Ministers of Education to go for a pan-European rather than an EU solution was far-reaching and smart, as it helped to circumvent the fact that education in the EU member states has been a national concern under the heading of subsidiarity; hence, education was not a matter for EU policies, with the exception of a niche of, by origin, vocational training and the recognition of professional qualifications in the context of the free movement of workers that the Commission used for setting up the programmes mentioned above, such as Erasmus and Socrates. In essence, the Bologna Process consisted of a series of biannual multilateral conferences with incremental rounds of decision making. For instance, three consecutive meetings between 1999 and 2003 decided on its ten ‘action lines’. The main action lines are the adoption of a comparable degree system and a two-cycle system (Bachelor and Master), as well as the promotion of mobility and cooperation in quality assurance. The results of these (and later) meetings are expressed in *Communiqués* named after the city where the Bologna Process gathers. Notwithstanding its declaration format, in practice, and as a result of codification, the *Bologna Declaration* has received the status of an international convention in which states are ‘parties’. In 2003 the monitoring procedure of the implementation of its decisions took the form of a ‘stocktaking’ procedure with a standard template for national reports and a set of criteria and benchmarks for a scoreboard. Stocktaking reports were published in 2005, 2007 and 2009. The Bologna Process’s way of working resembles the EU’s Open Method of Coordination, as it is not based on ‘hard law’, but rather on ‘soft law’, with guidelines, indicators, benchmarking and sharing of best practice.
The Bologna Process as an International Political Institution

Despite its ‘soft’ character as an international institution, the Bologna Process has moved toward an international organization in the same way as in the nineteenth century series of multilateral conferences did, before institutionalizing into permanent international organizations (cf. Reinalda 2009). It does not fully meet the three criteria of an intergovernmental organization, but it comes close to it in spite of its loose structure. It has a written agreement between governments, even if this is not legally binding (the Bologna Declaration); there are more than three ‘member states’; and there is a follow-up group, which, however, has not a permanent secretariat as we find in most intergovernmental organizations, as it rotates between the organizing cities/countries. But it does take care of continuity until 2020, and probably later.

The loose structure of the Bologna Process is complicated too as various websites demonstrate. Let me explain the main actors and structures. The number of European states that became party to the Bologna Declaration rose from 29 in 1999 to 40 in 2003 and 46 in 2009. It includes Turkey and the Russian Federation, but not Belarus, while Kazakhstan has applicant status and became a member of the EHEA in 2010. Various international and non-governmental organizations are participating in the Bologna Process.

The European Commission is an additional full member of the Bologna Process. When initiating the Bologna Process the Ministers of Education profited from the Commission’s experience in cooperation under programmes such as Erasmus, Socrates and Jean Monnet. Student and staff mobility in Europe, although promoted by the Bologna Process, is in fact and to a great extent based on the mobility schemes set up and financed by the European Commission in the EU member states and a few non-EU countries independently of the Bologna Process. The Ministers’ use of the Commission’s activities also took the tangible form of having some activities of the Bologna Process funded by the Socrates Programme, such as the organization of seminars and the writing of various reports. In turn the Commission has profited from the Bologna Process as a reform movement, as this resulted in a de facto increase in EU commitment in the field of higher education. Because the reforms did not use hard law as in the EU’s economic pillar, the member states accepted this defiance of subsidiarity.

Various international organizations are consultative members of the Bologna Process. The intergovernmental organizations Council of Europe and UNESCO / CEPES (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization / European Centre for Higher Education) are significant for the Bologna Process because of their regional conventions covering academic recognition by various countries, in particular their 1997 Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications.

Four of the six non-governmental organizations that the Ministers of Education who initiated the Bologna Process included for reasons of legitimacy, are known together as the E4, or E4 group of ‘stakeholders’. These are the European University Association (EUA), which regards itself as the main voice of the higher education community in Europe and has taken an active role in the work programme of the Bologna Process, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), which represents the sector of professional higher education, the European Students’ Union (ESU), which in spite of its somewhat more critical attitude towards the Bologna reforms than the EUA has in fact evolved into another strong pillar supporting the Bologna Process, and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The practical and financial support provided by the Ministers of Education and the European Commission strengthened their European organization structures and made the E4 into an influential and committed group of NGOs in the process of transformation of higher education.
Despite the fact that teachers and staff have to implement the changes set in motion in their disciplines by the Bologna Process, the initiating Ministers of Education did not invite any professional or other organizations of university staff to consultative membership. The European teachers’ trade union Education International Pan-European Structure (EI) and the European employers’ organization Union of Industrial and Employers’ Confederations of Europe (UNICE) – which are associations of a more general character – became consultative members of the Bologna Process rather late (in 2005). Their position within the Bologna framework has also been weak, because the issue of implications for university staff has not reached priority status on the agenda of the Bologna Process. Hence, from the perspective of actors in the Process universities, students and those engaged in quality assurance are the major players in the eyes of the Ministers of Education.

After the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 a Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) was set up, consisting of all signatory countries, the European Commission and the eight consultative members mentioned above. It drafts a programme of events and themes, appoints a general rapporteur for the Ministerial Conferences that are organized every two years to evaluate the progress and to set priorities and guidelines for the upcoming period. A central instrument for evaluating progress and designing future directions has been the so-called Trends reports, written by a combination of experts and published by the European University Association in 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2010. Various important topics are discussed at so-called ‘Bologna seminars’. The stocktaking procedure, resulting in stocktaking reports in 2005, 2007 and 2009, was mentioned before. Until 2009 the Bologna Process was chaired by the country holding the EU Presidency. Starting 1 July 2010 the Bologna Process is chaired by both the country holding the EU Presidency and a non-EU country, named in alphabetical order.

In 2010 the Ministers of Education participating in the Bologna Process launched the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), as envisaged in the Bologna Declaration of 1999. The launching of the EHEA of 47 countries in March 2010 during the Budapest-Vienna anniversary conference of the Bologna Process is regarded as the accomplishment of an objective set in the 1999 Bologna Declaration. This does not mean that the Bologna Process is over; it means that in 2010 the Bologna Process entered a new phase, in which the Bologna Follow-Up Group will propose measures to facilitate the proper and full implementation of the agreed Bologna principles and action lines across the European Higher Education Area. The EHEA makes use of the Bologna Process support structures, which were changed in a few respects. Now Ministerial Conferences will take place every three years, in 2012 in Bucharest, and after that in 2015 and 2018, as well as in 2020 (another anniversary conference). Between the Ministerial Conferences the Bologna Follow-Up Group oversees the Bologna Process, meeting at least once every six months, usually for one-and-a-half days. The work between two BFUG meetings is overseen by a Board, composed of the EHEA Chairs double Troika (the outgoing, present and incoming EHEA Chairs), the EHEA Vice-Chairs, the European Commission and four consultative members (Council of Europe, EUA, EURASHE and ESU). This selection of consultative members confirms the strong position of universities and students, and once again illustrates the absence of teachers and staff. The overall follow-up work is supported by a Secretariat, provided by the country hosting the next Ministerial Conference. Since July 2010 this is held by Romania. While the previous websites appeared as Bologna Process websites (Berlin: 2001-2003, Norway: 2003-2005, United Kingdom: 2005-2007, Benelux: 2007-2010), the present website is an EHEA one (www.ehea.info). Coupled with the Ministerial Conferences so-called Bologna Policy Forums have been organized in order to enable further debate on the EHEA. The first one took place in 2009, the second in 2010. The third one will be organized in 2012 to debate the progress of the EHEA on the global scale.
Effects of the Bologna Process By 2008

Let me first summarize what I had found on the effects of the Bologna Process by 2008, based on the stocktaking and Trends reports. The stocktaking reports use a five-point scale with corresponding colour codes (red / orange / yellow / light green / dark green) to indicate the progress made with regard to the various action lines. The message of the first (2005) stocktaking exercise was that the Bologna Process was working and that the EHEA was beginning to take shape, because almost all countries had embarked upon the reform process along the lines set out by the Bologna Declaration. The 2007 scoreboard showed that ‘the overall picture within the Bologna Process is much more “green” than it was in 2005’ (Bologna Process 2007: 2). In this optimistic account two themes are important because they link the various action lines: 1) a focus on learners and 2) a focus on learning outcomes. In order to be successful all countries need to ‘use learning outcomes as a basis for their national qualifications frameworks, systems for credit transfer and accumulation, the diploma supplement, recognition of prior learning and quality assurance’ (Bologna Process 2007: 3).

Critical remarks can be found in the stocktaking reports as well. The progress made, for instance, is not uniform across all countries and all action lines; there are still problems with the recognition of qualifications in other countries; there are questions about the employability of bachelor degree holders and the opportunities for doctoral students to take up research careers; and it will take time before flexible learning paths will become a reality in all countries. In general it is argued that the move towards adopting a learning outcomes approach in higher education takes time.

The Trends reports reveal even more effects than a process going more or less in a desired direction of specific action lines. Sybille Reich and Christian Tauch, authors of the 2005 Trends report, argue that European higher education has been undergoing fundamental reforms often well beyond the already large scope of the Bologna reforms, which includes the introduction of new systems of quality assessment and accreditation. They refer to changes in steering and funding mechanisms, governance structures, distribution of competences, differentiation of, and articulation between, institutional types, and career conditions. Many universities and other institutions of higher education have integrated the Bologna reforms into their institutional development. By doing so they managed to transform an ‘essentially top-down agenda into their own bottom-up interpretation of desirable change’ (Reichert and Tauch 2005: 41). In other words, the national reform agenda triggered by the Bologna Process was used by a determined institutional leadership as an opportunity to reform the institutions themselves. Two major drawbacks of all these reform processes (both national and institutional) have been the financial costs (most of the Bologna and other reforms had to be borne by the institutions themselves) and the investment of time needed for deliberation, adjustment and improvement within the institutions (these investments of time were at the cost of other projects, research in particular). Universities and other institutions learned that it takes longer to implement reform than it does to conceive it. The process of reform also resulted in a growing sense of reform fatigue in a period of general under-funding of higher education and increased competition among universities on a European or even global scale.

Academic disciplines such as political science are not being discussed in the Bologna Process, as the decisions generally refer to national levels and institutions of higher education. However, the transformation and harmonization of national educational systems has also affected academic disciplines. The introduction of new degree structures, procedures and institutions, the focus on learners and the adaptation of doctoral education, all imply that disciplines have to deal with a new and mostly European format, characterised by the Bachelor and Master structure and the movement of students between European political science departments. The disciplines have to take into account changes in the duration of the curriculum, which over time has come down from seven or six years to five or even four...
years. This means that they have to organize more compact programmes in two cycles of three plus two years or three plus one year. This is not about teaching the same in less time, but has to be based on new programmes. The main consequence for political science is that it may lose the cohesion it has established since the 1960s and 1970s, when the adoption of the behavioural approach helped to distinguish political science from other disciplines, such as law, philosophy, economics and history. The Bologna Process may weaken this coherence in other ways, for instance by strengthening parts of the discipline as autonomous disciplines (such as public administration, international relations and communication studies), the focus on learners and pressure towards interdisciplinarity, as can be found in the conditions for European research programmes. When referring to the role of universities in the ‘Europe of knowledge’ the European Commission argued that the academic world had ‘an urgent need to adapt to the interdisciplinary character of the fields opened up by society’s major problems such as sustainable development, the new medical scourges, risk management, etc.’ (European Commission 2003: 7). Higher education institutions should be enabled and encouraged to have flexibility in their organization to develop ‘more work falling between the disciplines’ (European Commission 2003: 17). Apart from this political and institutional pressure towards interdisciplinarity political science has to deal with the somewhat hidden shift from teacher-oriented approaches to learning to student-oriented approaches that was set in motion by the Bologna and institutional reforms. The 2007 Trends report refers to the fact that institutions are slowly moving into this new direction, with institutions and their staff being ‘still at the early stages of realising the potential of reforms for these purposes’. The report authors speak about a ‘key medium-term challenge’: ‘When achieved, it will enable students to become the engaged subjects of their own learning process, and also contribute to improving many issues of progression between cycles, institutions, sectors, the labour market and countries’ (Crosier, Purser et al. 2007: 7).

The response to the Bologna and related reforms by political science has been to address problems of accreditation and quality improvement (by public administration) and to formulate a minimum definition of the discipline (by political science). Political science hence did not question the main direction of the reforms but proposed a common core syllabus by explicitly defining a common ‘bottom line’ for disciplinary cohesion. This reaction enables the achievement of the Bologna requirements and leaves departments in Europe with some flexibility in organizing their studies. However, it may be questioned whether the discipline of political science is organized strongly enough to meet the ongoing reform challenges, which leave the discipline less time to build up its core elements, pushes towards interdisciplinarity and student-oriented approaches to learning that may weaken the discipline’s coherence even further. As far as I know no association exists that follows the Bologna and other reforms in a critical sense from the perspective of the discipline of political science or, broader, the social sciences. The ECPR, the European Consortium on Political Research, has not been a player in the field of education (although it began to publish the journal EPS which deals with the discipline); epsNet has ceased to exist and the newly established European Confederation of Political Science Associations (ECPSA) still has to prove itself as a player, also in this field of pan-European policy making (it wants to share information about the Bologna Process and other developments in higher education and has begun to make inventories of national situations).

**Effects of the Bologna Process: Developments Since 2008**

The Communiqué of the conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, issued in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, in April 2009, was called *The Bologna Process 2020 – The European Higher Education Area in the new decade*. It speaks about the ‘modernization’ of higher education by the Bologna Process and refers to the adoption of
European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (in 2005) and the establishment of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) in 2008. Both were developed by the E4 group of stakeholders. Since ‘not all the objectives have been completely achieved’, an ‘increased momentum and commitment beyond 2010’ is required, with a planning of conferences up to 2020. The higher education priorities for the decade to come are mentioned under the heading ‘Learning for the future’. The Communiqué then addresses ‘the challenges of the new era’. Among these are a widening of access to higher education, lifelong learning as an integral part of the education systems, an ongoing curricular reform geared toward the development of learning outcomes and an increase in mobility. In 2020, at least 20 per cent of those graduating in the EHEA should have had a study or training period abroad.

In the period between London (2007) and Leuven (2009) the Council of Europe has taken on responsibility for coordinating the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks, which covers its field of expertise. It chairs the Bologna Coordination Group on Qualifications Frameworks, set up by the BFUG in 2007. In a separate paper the Council of Europe also mentions its other active contributions to the Bologna Process. It underlines that it contributed to the debates about the Bologna Process in a global context, the development of the EHEA beyond 2010 and the definition of the public responsibility for higher education and research. It argues that the roles and functions of higher education in modern societies should be put on the EHEA agenda in broader terms, focussing on the development and maintenance of democratic culture and the promotion of an intercultural dialogue. It also wants that the public responsibility for higher education and research should remain high on the EHEA agenda (Council of Europe 2009). This paper shows that the Council of Europe has assured itself a recognizable position within the Bologna Process/EHEA and as such adds to the agenda.

The stocktaking report issued by the Leuven or Benelux team is far more critical than the previous two reports. In the stocktaking procedure for 2009 the criteria for the indicators were ‘substantially more demanding’; as a result the overall picture for the whole EHEA was ‘not as “green” in 2009 as it was in the two previous stocktaking reports in 2005 and 2007’ (Bologna Process 2009: 6). While the implementation of external quality assurance was proceeding rapidly, the development of internal quality assurance at institutions of higher education was progressing more slowly. Often it remained just a matter of writing a self-assessment report for external review. The stage of implementation of the (otherwise successful) Diploma Supplement was ‘not as widely as would have been expected’ (Bologna Process 2009: 9). Only half of the countries had managed to implement it fully by 2009. The report also recognizes that there still is a long way to go before there is a coherent approach to recognition of qualifications within the EHEA. Compliance of national legislation with the Lisbon Recognition Convention of the Council of Europe and UNESCO is greener than in 2007, but the indicator alone – which does not show compliance of national legislation, but rather national legislation ‘not being in conflict’ – does not measure the actual recognition practices, especially those inside the institutions. This time it was necessary that credits with regard to the stage of implementation of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) were demonstrably linked with learning outcomes in order to score ‘green’ or ‘light green’. As a result of the more demanding indicators some countries shifted downwards compared to 2007 (Bologna Process 2009: 10). Few countries have made an explicit link between flexible learning and their national qualifications frameworks and although three quarters of the countries had amended their legislation to allow awarding of joint degrees, only few were involved in joint degree cooperation. These examples show that implementation of the Bologna Process action lines, definitely with the change of paradigm towards learning outcomes, is far from complete. Both the Bologna Process itself and the other actors,
including the Council of Europe, need to stay active in order to reach the goals. The examples also show that the Bologna Process is a continuous development and that it cannot be expected that it will have completed its work by 2020. It may be questioned whether the soft law mechanism is strong enough to actually promote compliance. Naming and shaming can be effective in fields such as human rights and economics, but one wonders whether this is true to the same extent in this field of higher education, where more critical actors, such as NGOs, are missing or, in the case of the Bologna Process, are too much part of the process itself.

On 11 and 12 March 2010 the Ministers Responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process met in Budapest and Vienna, where they launched the EHEA. The Budapest-Vienna Declaration has a very general character. The ministers note that ‘adjustments and further work, involving staff and students, are necessary at European, national, and especially institutional levels to achieve the European Higher Education Area as we envisage it’. They refer to the role that higher education institutions play in fostering peaceful democratic societies and reaffirm that higher education is a public responsibility. These words obviously refer to the aspects mentioned by the Council of Europe. The Ministers acknowledge the key role of the academic community and argue that by continuously developing, enhancing and strengthening the EHEA and taking further the synergies with the European Research Area, Europe will be able to ‘successfully face the challenges of the next decade’. In short, it is a declaration with beautiful words and good intentions at the beginning of another decade.

The *Trends* report 2010, written by Andrée Sursock and Hanne Smidt, was timed to coincide with the launch of the EHEA, rather than with the 2009 Ministerial Conference, as it wants to examine the achievements of the Bologna-driven reforms within the broader context of a decade of change in higher education. The critical remarks in this *Trends* report are along the ones found in the stocktaking report. Some of these weaknesses seem quite serious, also because they depend on both a cultural challenge to existing teaching traditions and a financial challenge to address ‘costlier requirements such as human resource development, new classroom infrastructures and smaller student-staff ratios’, as EUA President Jean-Marc Rapp signalizes in his foreword to this *Trends* report (Sursock and Smidt 2010: 4). The financial challenge has to be taken seriously, given the restrictions in this respect as a result of the severe and ongoing financial crisis and related cutbacks in higher education budgets.

Among the shortcomings of the Bologna Process are the following ones. While in 2010 95 per cent of the institutions have introduced the Bachelor and Master structure (compared to 53 per cent in 2003), this has not led to meaningful curricular renewal, but rather to ‘compressed Bachelor degrees that leave little flexibility for students’ (Sursock and Smidt 2010: 7). There is some progress in shifting to modularization, learning outcomes and student-centred learning, but this crucial paradigm shift requires further resources to support smaller staff-student ratios, adapted class rooms and staff development. The use of the Diploma Supplement is growing indeed, but this seems to be relegated to an administrative function and disconnected from new developments such as learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks. It does not engage academics as it should according to the guidelines of the Bologna Process itself. The combination of such shortcomings as compressed Bachelor degrees, insufficient resources for building more flexible curricula and administrative procedures without engagement of academics seems worrisome and refers to grave weaknesses in the implementation of the Bologna Process.

Other problematic or ‘challenging’ aspects being mentioned in the *Trends* report are the challenge of attracting and teaching a more diversified student body and the introduction of institutional policies which are more inclusive and responsive from the perspectives of lifelong learning and widening participation and access. The institutions of higher education
expect that internationalization will be the most important change driver within the next five years. This requires an integrated internationalization approach to teaching and research through a focus on strategic partnerships. However, it is yet unclear whether this strategic approach ‘will prevail over the more traditional form of “bottom-up” cooperation initiated by individual academics’ (Sursock and Smidt 2010: 8). Knowing myself that many forms of internationalization depend on cooperation by individual (well-motivated) academics and that top-down policies by institutions meet with great difficulties when they try to enlarge the group of engaged academics, this seems a major challenge for both the medium and the long term. Student services also have to change. There is a shift going on, with the focus moving from providing student guidance primarily during the pre-admission phase to improving student retention and preparing students for employment. Career guidance and psychological counselling services are the fastest growing areas. In general it is concluded that the importance of student services has been relatively ignored as a policy priority during the Bologna decade. This means that the institutions need to ensure that students will have access to such services (Sursock and Smidt 2010: 9). While the rapid implementation of Bologna ‘tools’ peaked around 2007, the next phase will be to deepen the change process by ‘creating new organisational cultures’, according to the Trends report. This implies that greater coordinated communication efforts are needed. Successful implementation is partly conditional on the capacity of institutional leaders ‘to bring institutional coherence to a multi-dimensional change agenda, and to explain, persuade and motivate staff members, and students’ (Sursock and Smidt 2010: 9). Emphasis should therefore be placed on institutional responsibility in the further implementation of the Bologna Process. The higher education institutions should have ‘considerable scope in implementing the change agenda, which they must be able to relate to their specific mission and objectives, thereby respecting institutional diversity’ (Sursock and Smidt 2010: 10).

The Trends report 2010 identifies four policy priorities for the EHEA. The first one is that higher education policies must be framed within a broad vision of the society of the future and of its educated citizens. The second one is that the current stress on indicators in the Bologna Process should not overshadow the importance of ‘keeping a balance between accountability and improvement, quality measurement and quality assurance, and a thoughtful articulation between what needs to be done internally (at the level of the institutions) and externally (by governments and quasi-governmental agencies)’. The third one is that there needs to be more joint European cooperation outside Europe, as this cooperation now is ‘little’, which refers to a weakness of the Bologna Process as an actor at the global level. The last priority is to strengthen the links between the European higher education and research areas (Sursock and Smidt 2010: 10). The European University Association regards the links between research, education and innovation as a critical success factor, according to EUA President Rapp: ‘the condition for successful change in the next decade requires reinforcing the links in the knowledge chain and placing universities, as institutions, at the centre of European and national policies’ (Sursock and Smidt 2010: 4).

Conclusions
Which conclusions can be drawn from the developments described above with the help of documents closely related to the Bologna Process itself? I will discuss: 1) the Bologna Process as an international institution, 2) the European Higher Education Area of 47 states, 3) the mixed results of the Bologna action lines, 4) the crucial role of the European Commission in the Bologna reforms and in EU research, 5) the large role of higher education institutions, and 6) the restricted role of academic staff.

1. The Bologna Process exists. It is alive and kicking, with a planning for another decade (until 2020). It has an organizational structure that is functioning and stable.
Although it does not fully meet the criteria of an intergovernmental organization, it comes close to it. The Bologna Process has one non-state member (the European Commission) and has engaged two intergovernmental organizations and six NGOs, of which four NGOs (the E4) function as a central group of stakeholders, supporting and elaborating much of the work. The secretariat is rotating and it can be discussed whether it is the BFUG or rather the European Commission that is the leading actor in this process (I’ll come back to this issue under 4). Compared to the situation before 2008 I have the impression that the Council of Europe has reinforced its position within the Bologna Process with regard to its field of expertise (qualifications frameworks), which is what may be expected from stable IGOs engaged in battles over boundaries between them. The most obvious absent IGO, in particular because of its expertise and data on education, is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The OECD was not invited, probably because it is an intercontinental, rather than a European organization. UNESCO as a universal organization only plays a minor role through its regional centre for higher education because of its common convention with the Council of Europe.

2. The Bologna Process has indeed created the European Higher Education Area and set in motion a transformation process of higher education all over Europe, with the exception of Belarus and the small countries Monaco and San Marino. Kyrgyzstan, Northern Cyprus, Israel and Kosovo applied to be included, but for various reasons are not eligible to join. All other countries, including Turkey and the Russian Federation, which covers large parts of both Europe and Asia, have showed an interest in being part of the process. Notwithstanding the great variety of educational systems and the close relationship between education and national identity (which is also reflected in the EU’s original absence of educational activities), all countries have been participating.

3. The Bologna Process is not based on a legally-binding intergovernmental treaty, nor does it use ‘hard’ law in the form of international conventions or treaties as the Council of Europe and UNESCO do. Instead is has a soft law approach, similar to what in the EU is called the Open Method of Coordination, with guidelines, indicators, benchmarking and sharing of best practices. It uses its stocktaking procedure and a variety of reports written by its stakeholders to clarify the extent of (non-)compliance. When the criteria for the indicators are made more demanding, as was the case in 2009, the results are ‘less green’ than in 2005 and 2007, when probably a political need existed to show that the process was successful. The latest, more critical stocktaking results, in both the 2009 stocktaking report and the 2010 Trends report, show that the Bologna Process has serious problems in implementing crucial elements, such as curricular renewal in the Bachelor, the engagement of academics in the Diploma Supplement, internal quality assurance, the actual recognition of qualifications, joint degrees and cooperation outside Europe. Given the essential change of paradigm towards learning outcomes and flexible programmes, it sounds disquieting that there are substantial cultural and financial impediments which do not allow essential elements to be realized, such as smaller staff-students ratios, adapted class rooms and staff development. Besides, more resources are needed for student services. These shortcomings do not mean that there is no harmonization taking place, but it shows that there are still differences between countries and fields and that the question can be raised whether the soft law mechanism is able to overcome these shortcomings, or that countries (and the Bologna Process) will accept that countries will underperform and that there will be
a division between stronger and weaker performers. Is it wrong to ask whether the Bologna Process and the EHEA are incomplete, even if they function as such?

4. The European Commission is a remarkable player in the field of higher education. During the late 1980s and early 1990s it made use of a window of opportunity within the EU to expand the concept of vocational training to include mobility programmes for higher education. After the Treaty of Maastricht, which in fact acknowledged these activities, the Commission managed to further expand its higher education activities. In the Bologna Process it has played an active role from the very beginning (1999). It brought with it the experience it had in international mobility of students, in particular its credit transfer system, as well as its financial support of mobility (most mobility programmes include EU member states and a few non-EU members, hence not the other European states) and, very important for the functioning of the Bologna Process, its financial support of several Bologna projects and reports. It aligned its own activities with the Bologna reform. Ruth Keeling, who discusses the Commission’s role in the higher education discourse in Europe, underlines this practical support of the Bologna Process by the Commission and argues furthermore that the Commission propagates a discourse that constructs higher education as purposeful, measurable and economically beneficial for both individuals and society. Invoking the Bologna reforms confirms ‘the legitimacy of EU action in higher education, providing “external” references which justify the Commission’s increased activity in the tertiary education sector’ (Keeling 2006: 212). When discussing the European Commission Keeling includes its activities in the field of research and its preference for applied research. The Commission used the EU’s 2000 Lisbon strategy for economic growth and employment to extend its involvement in the higher education sector by including research aspects. In its 2003 Action Plan ‘Investing in Research’ it recognized higher education institutions among the key stakeholders in European research and in 2005 it came with plans for a European Research Funding Council and a European Institute of Technology. Between 2003 and 2005 it found support for a strategy of synergies between higher education and research in the Bologna Process or, in Bologna terms, between the EHEA and the EU’s European Research Area. ‘The Lisbon-based research agenda and the Bologna Process have assisted the Commission to disseminate an influential European discourse of higher education’, in which ‘the research-Bologna nexus’ presents learning and research as a necessarily collaborative activity (Keeling 2006: 208, 210). The synergies between the EHEA and the European Research Area are also mentioned in the 2010 Budapest-Vienna Declaration. Furthermore the global outreach by the Commission, for instance, through its Erasmus Mundus Masters Programme, can be mentioned here, followed by the Bologna strategy of joint European cooperation outside Europe. If Keeling’s analysis is correct, the Bologna Process is not only an actor by itself (as described above under 1-3), but also an actor strongly influenced by, and depending on, the European Commission, with its strong drive to play a role in higher education and research, its practical experience in various of the Bologna fields and, most important, its ease of use of resources. It also means that the discourse on higher education is not dominated by educational policies, as can be expected in an international organization focussing on higher education in Europe, but rather by ‘political’ policies initiated by the broader-oriented European Commission.

5. The developments in the Bologna Process since 2008 confirm the previous conclusion by Reichert and Tauch about the relatively active role of higher education institutions that decided to adopt the Bologna reforms and to integrate
them into their own institutional development. The 2010 *Trends* report refers to the institutional responsibility in the further implementation of the Bologna reforms, with success depending on, amongst other factors, the capacity of institutional leaders to persuade staff and students. Whether the extremely active role by the institutions was intended, is hard to say. My impression is that the leadership of many an institution has used the window of opportunity created by the Bologna Process and its national strategies to play a much larger role than changing what was covered by the action lines of the Bologna Process. During the 2000s professional universities in the Netherlands, for instance, continued their older (and actually finished) process of merging their institutions into even bigger entities with highly-paid CEOs, who were dealing with merger and building problems rather than with educational policies. They regarded the EU’s Lisbon strategy as supporting their merging policies, as ‘Lisbon’ promoted the idea that by 2020 50 per cent of the Dutch labour force should have had higher education. They used competency-based learning to focus their business plans for the enlarged institutions. The way this ‘modern’ way of teaching was implemented resulted in a focus on skills and abilities to gather information and initiated the replacement of full teachers by (cheaper) coaches and tutors. During the process the CEOs found out that lower demands resulted in larger numbers of highly-educated people. Gradually, however, it was understood that in this way students of professional universities were worse off, because they learned less. A few scandals about extremely high CEO salaries and large-scale fraud with exams resulted in a critical reflection about these initiated changes and a preference for smaller professional universities early this summer. Recently, however, three Dutch universities (Leyden, Rotterdam, Delft) proposed to merge into a new university that will rank higher on the Shanghai ranking index with 55,000 students and a huge budget. It is fascinating to see not only how quickly lessons learned are forgotten (after one month), but also that higher education institutions understand themselves as self-evident initiators of new developments. Both the Bologna Process and the Lisbon strategy are arguments they refer to. It would make sense to find out more about the side effects of the Bologna Process. Christine Musselin discussed the case of France. She argues that French public authorities used the new two-cycle structure of Bachelor and Master to achieve other objectives by grasping the opportunity to simultaneously promote university autonomy, standardize the degree offer among the different institutional sectors and transform the state-university relationships. She also observed side effects, such as the fostering of cooperation and joint development of curricula among higher education institutions located in the same city, a questioning of the internal structure of universities which led to some reorganization and a reinforcement of the power of academics on the management of curricula to the detriment of the university level (in: Amaral, Neave et al. 2009: 175).

6. Although Musselin refers to a revival of the academic profession in the case of France, this probably is an exception. The Bologna Process has a focus on students and learning outcomes. Both universities and students are well-represented in the E4 and Bologna bodies, while university staff is absent in the various bodies; yet, since 2005 the staff has been weakly represented by the European branch of an international teachers’ trade union. This means that university staff is not regarded as ‘stakeholders’, although it could be argued that they are the ones who have to educate and train the new generations of students and know what it is all about. There are no European associations of university teachers or professors, as exist in
the US and Canada, and the curiosity and interest of national and international political science associations in the reform developments has been restricted. Most academics seem to know that changes are taking place (‘as usual’), but are not inclined to find out and understand what exactly is happening in politics and academia, at least that is my impression. However, the continuous character of the interrelated transformation processes with regard to teaching and research should not be underestimated. In Keeling’s perspective she demonstrates that the European Commission promotes a specific idea of research. The growing significance of the research elements of the Lisbon strategy has provided the Commission with a critical opening to advocate substantial reform of institutional and research management in Europe’s universities in the early 2000s, according to Keeling. The Commission presented a bold plan to double funds available for research at the European level under the 7th Research Framework Programme and made recommendations concerning institutional governance, financing arrangements and curricular reform, whilst emphasising the need to guarantee universities’ operational autonomy and to stabilise their core funding. The Commission prescribed ‘detailed measures for university reform, including performance-linked pay for academics, tax incentives for university-industry cooperation, and output-related funding for higher education institutions’ (Keeling 2006: 206). Keeling also shows that in the higher education discourse the Commission forges a line of argument which necessitates its own preference for ‘applied’ research by maintaining that ‘research products’, such as innovations, new technologies, knowledge assets and intellectual property, should be directed towards the benefits of society (Keeling 2006: 209). Early 2011 Thomas Rissen, Carina Sprungk and Tanja Börzel launched an initiative to protest against the downsizing of socio-economic and humanities research in the EU’s plans for 8th Research Framework Programme, which resulted in protest letters to the European Commission by various political science associations. During the preparations of this new Framework Programme the plan was to abolish broader, long-term integrated projects in social sciences and humanities. Instead, a focus on ‘grand challenges’ was proposed with topics that are more applied than basic research and that are supposed to foster European competitiveness on global markets, which according to Börzel made the social science an ‘auxiliary’ discipline to be mainstreamed into the other sciences. The planning included the downsizing of funding for socio-economic and humanities research projects and the downgrading of socio-economic and humanities research in the Directorate-General Research from a department to one single office (e-mail Börzel 8 December 2010 through EUSA list).

Given the fact that European funding for research has become more and more important, this example of the 8th Research Framework Programme seems a convincing argument to closely analyse what is going on in European higher education, both research and education, from the perspective of political science or, broader, the social sciences. What kinds of developments have taken place as a result of the Lisbon Strategy and the Bologna Process? Which are the conditions for teaching and research in political science? And, if we do not agree, what can we do?


2 The changes with regard to doctoral education, or the third cycle, include the expansion of doctoral schools and more attention being paid to the supervision and training of doctoral students.

3 In her paper for this ECPR conference Anne Corbett discusses the British experience. ‘The UK (England) government went into the Bologna Process convinced that it would not have to change its system, because the majority of European participants in the Bologna process would conform to the UK (England) model. The most important action plank was seen to be the predominant English degree structure of three-year undergraduate and one year masters. Why did the British expect to provide the universal model and why has this proven not to be the case?’ She mentions that ‘the EHEA is not converging on a single model of a HE system’.