

## Chapter I

# Introduction

This report presents the results of *Progetto UNIVERSITAS – A feasibility study for the creation of an international university for Central and South Eastern Europe in the cross-border area Trieste-Koper*.

The first part of this introduction attempts to explain the structure of the project, how it was developed over time and the structure of the report. The second part focuses on higher education and its international dimension, by referring to the relevant emerging global, regional and local trends.

### *I.1. History and rationale of the project*

The idea of creating an international university for Central and South Eastern Europe dates back probably to the Central European Initiative (CEI) Summit held in Trieste in 2001. Progetto UNIVERSITAS was inspired by that discussion and a first project proposal was initially framed as a feasibility study for the realisation of such a university. However, the project remained still a proposal for a long period and in the meantime a new institutional framework for university cooperation emerged in the CEI context: the CEI University Network.

This new configuration for academic mobility and joint projects in Central and South Eastern Europe made an “international university” feasibility CEI study outdated. Nevertheless, the new form of the cooperation did not pre-empted the usefulness and validity of exploring models of international university cooperation in order to support, integrate and reinforce existing experiences and activities.

In 2004, the Central Directorate of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Government revived the project and, in partnership with the Municipality of Koper and the University of Trieste, launched Progetto UNIVERSITAS with the support of Interreg IIIA Italy-Slovenia Programme, Strand 3.1. Qualification of human resources.

In the new context, UNIVERSITAS turned to a goal, which was broader than the original one. In fact, the objective of UNIVERSITAS has become the monitoring of the resources available in the cross-border Italo-Slovene area, with a view to the implementation of international university cooperation in Central and South-East Europe. In particular, the project intended to explore the feasibility of the following three models of cooperation: the network (university networks working on single projects and managed through existing resources and facilities), the international faculty (joint faculties created by using human resources from universities belonging to the network), and the new university (creating a brand new international university

with its own staff, as well as its own teaching and research programmes). It was evident from the very beginning that the institutional context of the future possible Euroregion involving the Italian regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia and Veneto, the Republic of Slovenia, the Austrian land of Carinzia, the Counties of Istria and Primorje-Gorski Kotar in Croatia, was an unavoidable reference for any cooperation proposal. Therefore, we considered the complex and plural territorial dimension of cooperation:

- an inner core, the Italo-Slovene cross-border area;
- an outer core, the Euroregion territories;
- the wider region of South Eastern Europe on one the hand, and the Western part of Hungary and the Slovak and Czech Republic on the other (this expansion of the target areas will be justified below).

The implementation of the project was entrusted by the Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Government to the Jacques Maritain Institute and by the Municipality of Koper to the University of Primorska.

The two implementing bodies have been working together to complete a complex research path, involving different phases:

§ a preliminary study to compare education systems in South East Europe, their key indicators, their structure, their legal framework to describe the context in which the models of academic international cooperation will operate;

§ a prospective analysis to identify the main trends affecting the higher education system of the region, which was based on the Delphi method;

§ local workshops for involving stakeholders from Italy and Slovenia to discuss potential developments of cooperation, its potential impact on the territory and, on the other hand, the environmental conditions for the functioning of the different cooperation models;

§ local workshops for assessing alternative strategies of cooperation.

This report is the final result of this process and presents the preliminary assessment of the models and the findings on which this assessment is based.

The first chapter offers an overview of higher education systems in Central and South Eastern Europe, according to some major structural indicators, both finance and non-finance.

The second chapter, drawing from EUA Institutional Development Programme, presents a series of case studies is presented, which illustrates the most recurring weaknesses and needs of higher education institutions, but also their assets and strategies. Finally, the chapter deals with the international dimension of higher education by focusing on experiences of international cooperation through networking and joint programmes (masters and doctorates). We decided to include in this section also a part dedicated to the issues of brain drain, as a sort of “pathology” of highly skilled workers mobility, as we consider cooperation also a tool for contrasting such a phenomenon.

The third chapter focuses on higher education trends by presenting the results of the Delphi survey conducted during Progetto UNIVERSITAS with an international group of experts and aimed at assessing the desirability and probability of occurrence of macro-trends which are likely to shape international university cooperation in Central and South Eastern Europe. Then, a more restricted focus is adopted and the Italo-Slovene cross-border area is observed, its higher education and research capacity, its current academic standard and its present international cooperation activities.

Finally, a summary of the local stakeholders' opinions on the regional potential and the most effective and feasible models of cooperation are presented, as they were collected during the four workshops that were organised (two in Italy and two in Slovenia).

The fourth and final chapter outlines alternative model proposals for university cooperation. Drawing from the findings of the previous project phases and from the judgements of the surveyed international and local experts and stakeholders, four alternatives are outlined: a network model, which is aimed to the realisation of joint doctoral study programmes; an international faculty model, which is targeted to the formation of joint faculties by different countries and universities; a “networked-facilities” model which is based on the networking of research facilities in the framework of an harmonization of doctoral programmes in the Euroregion; a new perspective on the idea of the “brand new university” (the creation of a “Collegium Adriaticum”). For each model, a short description of governance structure, staff and infrastructure, activities, legal status and financial sustainability is presented.

## *1.2. Higher education in context: global, regional and local trends*

Framework, introducing briefly the general project we then focus on higher education. This section has the purpose of presenting the macro-trends shaping the environment of higher education in general and of university cooperation in particular. Three levels of analysis have been considered:

§ a global one, referring to the globalization process and the emergence of what is defined as “knowledge economy”;

§ a regional one, concerning the dynamics of integration and of cooperation linked to the EU Accession process, as well as to the Stabilisation and Pre-Accession policies for Western Balkans;

§ a local one, related to local development processes and the role of knowledge-based local and regional innovation policies.

### *1.2.1. Knowledge, societies and economies: implications for universities*

No matter how brief, any account of global trends influencing higher education cannot escape the need to clarify the basic concepts underpinning the two influential discourses of “knowledge society” and “knowledge economy” on the one hand, and of globalisation on the other. The following paragraphs introduce shortly both aspects.

#### *1.2.1.1. Knowledge economy and society*

The theorization of the “knowledge society” and of the “knowledge economy” is one of the predominant elements in the intellectual landscape of the late XX century and it is still vigorous in the XXI. A classic example of the far-reaching character of such a theorization beyond academic boundaries, is the 2000 Lisbon European

Council conclusions, which established the goal of making Europe the most competitive knowledge economy worldwide by 2010, thus transforming this paradigm into the vault of European Union's development policies<sup>1</sup>.

However, as the "knowledge society" concept has a quite long and remarkable history and several interpretations, few preliminary remarks are needed for better defining such a notion, which will be used in our further elaborations.

Following Böhme (1997, p. 450), we notice that scholars and other commentators associated to the expression "knowledge society" two alternative meanings. On the one hand, it is considered simply a characterisation of society with a heuristic and policy making value, but, as a characterisation, it competes with other types of characterisation (e.g. risk society). On the other, "knowledge society" has been used as an "epochal concept", which describes an epoch or a historical phase of societal evolution and replaces a previous phase. Despite this ideal-typical distinction, there has been a certain degree of ambiguity in the use of these two perspectives. A short chronological review might be useful in better framing the meaning of "knowledge society".

A first reference to the concept might be found in Radovan Richta's work in the Sixties, which connects the surge of knowledge society with the scientific-technological revolution. The progressive transition from industrial society to a more knowledge-based stage of development is the core of Daniel Bell's definition of post-industrial society, a new societal formation based on the growing significance of "theoretical knowledge", i.e. scientific and technological knowledge (1974). In addition to those of Bell and Richta, other alternative theories focused on: the class-forming function of knowledge and the process of social mobility (Gouldner 1979); the view of knowledge as sharing the cultural capital of society, and its role in social reproduction and stratification (Böhme 1992).

However, the most influential perspective on knowledge society, and probably the closest to an epochal understanding of the concept, at least for the general public, is probably the "information society", whose features are reviewed by Webster (cited in Böhme 1997, p. 454):

§ society is, *technologically* speaking, an information society when it is essentially determined by the technological infrastructure of data transmission and processing;

§ it is *economically* an information society when the production and distribution of information become the leading economic sector;

§ it is *occupationally* an information society when a big or, of course, the biggest part of those employed work in information-processing occupations;

§ it is *spatially* an information society when its spatial structure is largely characterized by information networks;

§ finally it is *culturally* an information society when its cultural life essentially unfolds in a play of signs and it no longer distinguish between meaning and reality.

Despite the concrete support to such an understanding of knowledge society by the ever increasing importance of data processing systems and processes, these perspectives tend to equate knowledge and information, but perceive information in a

<sup>1</sup> The conclusions of the Council set for the Union a major strategic goal by 2010: "to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion".

non-meaningful way, thus black-boxing it. We attempt to further define the concept by referring to the literature on the similar, but not overlapping, concept of knowledge economy, which, according to Brint (2001), has a similar plural understanding<sup>2</sup>. Two perspectives are here highlighted.

The first, which is coherent with the “information society” perspective, dates back to the American economist Fritz Machlup, who defined knowledge as “any human (or human-induced) activity effectively designed to create, alter, or confirm in a human mind – one’s own or anyone else’s – a meaningful apperception, awareness, cognizance, or consciousness” (Machlup 1962, p. 30). From Machlup’s perspective, the major sectors of the production and distribution of knowledge are (1.) education (not only formal education), (2.) research and development, (3.) mass media, (4.) information technologies, (5.) professional services.

The second one is proposed by Brint himself and is a critique to Machlup and his school. Brint argues that Machlup’s definition of knowledge does not outline neat boundaries of ‘economically relevant’ knowledge and introduces the notion of ‘scientific-professional knowledge’, which is the relevant portion for knowledge economy. Scientific-professional knowledge includes principles and methods of analysis (in some cases, scientific theory) that can be used to expand knowledge base, to solve new problems, or to develop new applications; a continuous body of research aimed at advancing and using these principles and methods (Brint 2001, p. 114).

Such a definition of knowledge has two merits. On the one hand, it creates a relationship between the creation of new knowledge and a continuously growing body of research. On the other, this relationship establishes the universities as the locus where scientific knowledge is produced, thus distinguishing it from other producers of information.

### *1.2.1.2. Globalisation and Mode 2 of knowledge production*

After defining the type of knowledge which is relevant for our discussion on higher education systems in the context of the emerging “knowledge society”, we turn to the transformations of knowledge production and distribution in the contemporary global context.

Though the novelty of world interdependence as a social phenomenon has been debated since a long time<sup>3</sup>, we agree with Cobalti that globalisation, as a structural phenomenon of increasing worldwide interdependence, defines the most inclusive structural context and the largest reach for social action (Cobalti 2006a). From this

<sup>2</sup> Among others, two influential theorizations of the knowledge economy may be attributed to Galbraith (knowledge economy as the rationalisation of control and management of change in mature corporations) and Bell (knowledge economy as the product of high tech industry). Other authors have focussed on knowledge as a source of social stratification. This perspective finds Sassen’s studies on global cities (1994), which is exemplary in revealing the growth of unskilled service sector following the diffusion of financial services in global cities (according to Sassen financial services are the core of knowledge economy rather than R&D and scientific knowledge).

<sup>3</sup> See Wallerstein (1974) for his famous account of the naissance of world economy at the dawn of Modern Age and for his theory of the world system.

perspective, there is little doubt that the public discourse on globalisation and the related policy-making and economic model has an unprecedented and profound impact on education in general and higher education in particular. This implies that the study of education must consider the “International Political Economy” of globalisation, i.e. the dominant neoliberalist policy paradigm and discourse which accompanies, and fosters, its evolution. A corollary is that the national level of analysis cannot be separated from the international one.

Carnoy (in Cobalti 2006b, p. 103-104) outlines three main groups of policies which refer to this “global policy paradigm” and affect higher education, and namely the following: competitiveness-driven reforms, aimed at augmenting economic productivity through improving the quality of workforce; budget-driven reforms, aimed at structural adaptation and reduction of public funding of (higher) education; equality-driven policies, targeted to disadvantage groups which do not have fair access to education, in a view to reduce education inequalities and prevent the waste of talents. Firstly, competition applies a comparative and benchmarking perspective to quality standards of teaching and learning and favours the transition from a surveillance system based on *ex ante* resource distribution to an assessment system based on resource allocation according to achieved results. Secondly, financial reforms focus on funding reductions for the secondary and tertiary level of education and on decentralisation of public funding (the so-called off-loading, i.e. shift from central to local government) and privatization of education.

Beside the emergence of globalisation as a relevant factor shaping education systems, attention is due to a trend, which affects the creation of knowledge and which was defined as the transition from Mode 1 to Mode 2 of knowledge production (Gibbons et al. 1994; Nowotny et al. 2001, 2003).

Despite some criticism (e.g. Shinn 2002, Tuunainen 2002), the basic idea of a shift from a model characterized by the hegemony of theoretical or experimental science, by an internally-driven taxonomy of disciplines, by autonomy of scientists and their host institutions, to a different one, which is socially distributed, application-oriented, transdisciplinary and subject to multiple accountabilities, seems to correctly define the features of the new processes of knowledge creation. Such ‘Mode 2’ environment is radically different from the previous one with regard to three main aspects (Nowotny et al. 2003):

§ the steering of research priorities, by more directive approaches to research programmes at the supranational, national and systemic (universities and research councils) levels aimed at balancing political goals, promising science and existing research capacity in a top-down pro-active way;

§ the commercialization of research, as researchers turn increasingly to alternative sources of funding and universities (and research organisations) become increasingly aware of the value of the intellectual property they generate through their research;

§ the emphasis on accountability of science, which is moving from “the arena of professional (or collegial) responsibility to the domain of organisational (and managerial) competence”; thus pushing evaluation out of the close walls of universities, towards multiple stakeholders (e.g. Bucchi 2006, Etzkowitz 2003).

The new forms of accountability have highly relevant institutional implications for universities and emerge from the novel features of ‘Mode 2’ knowledge, which is

generated within a context of application, is trans-disciplinary, as it coalesce a range of theoretical perspectives and practical methodologies but neither being necessarily derived from pre-existing disciplines, nor contributing to the formation of new disciplines. This knowledge is produced in a much wider range of sites, inside and outside universities, it is highly reflexive, as it is no longer characterized as an objective investigation of the world and it has become a dialogic process between researchers and the subjects of their research. Such transdisciplinarity, reflexivity, combined with the multiplication of production sites create new and extended forms of accountability and quality control (Nowotny et al. 2001).

Globalisation and transition of modes of knowledge production are clearly interconnected trends. Emphasis on competition, reduction in funds, privatization, multiplication of sites and actors in knowledge production create new competitors for universities and augment competition among universities. Easier (virtual and physical) mobility extends such a competition beyond frontiers and projects it onto the global panorama. Bauman stresses the increasing competition between universities on the one hand, and other similar yet distinctive agencies on the other: 'Universities have to compete on allegedly equal terms with numerous other agencies, many of which are much more skilful in getting their message across' (Bauman, 2003, p. 130).

This pressure on higher education challenges the Humboldtian protected space of universities (Lazzeretti and Tavoletti 2006, pp. 95-99) and the features it associated to academic life and work: academic individualism in research and teaching, nation-state protection and support, orientation to the transmission of (national) culture, and self-government of academics.

New formulas like "academic capitalism" (Cobalti 2006b), which focuses on university efforts to search alternative sources of funding in the market; "entrepreneurial university", which emphasises the need of an effort to provide universities with elastic structures which are adaptable to every – changing circumstances, thus being able to understand external demands and provide quick solutions, and create an effective relation with the industry (Clark, 1998, p. 135); and "education industry", which refers not only to the role of education in the economy, but also to illustrate the vast sums of money that are annually spent on education by governments and individuals: "Citizen education and scientific research are becoming the key for a nation to achieve high economic status and through that, acquiring sizeable political power on the global scene" (Pawlowski 2004, p. 13).

The common trait of all these notions is that university exits the protected and relatively isolated Humboldtian space to establish a new relation with the wider social environment. According to this new relationship, "training and research activity [is] much more bounded than in the past, as the assessment of its effectiveness is tightly connected to the social mandate by which it is legitimated" (Zich 2006, p. 255). Having regard to the concept of scientific-professional knowledge introduced in the previous section, universities thus become organisations producing scientific-professional knowledge not only for their students (a direct and specific client) or for the state, but for a vast variety of social actors. Convergences between the two (direct and indirect) groups might occur, as well as contrasts. For instance, students' evaluation of institutional performance can make its way to external stakeholders; on the other hand, socio-economic issues as the unemployment rate of highly skilled workforce and the decreasing return on

educational investment for students, are central issues for society, and social pressure makes them a concern for the university system, thus benefiting students. Nevertheless, internal interests of maximising students' satisfaction, which includes academic success, might clash against the responsibility of certifying students' knowledge for society (the tighter the criteria, the better the tasks performed) (Lazzaretti e Tavoletti 2006, Battistelli 2006).

### *1.2.2. Regional processes of fragmentation and integration, and higher education*

Higher Education in Central and Eastern European Countries is influenced not only by the global trends mentioned in the previous sections of the report, but also by two contrasting processes which are highly specific. On the one hand, university system(s) in the region has experienced a sudden and dramatic fragmentation and degradation in the Nineties as an effect of the Soviet collapse and the start of the so-called transition period for Central and Eastern European Countries. On the other, these countries have experienced, and still are experiencing, a process of integration on a completely different basis, which is fostered by the parallel processes of European Union accession and, more specifically for Higher Education, the Bologna Process. We assume that such regional processes abridge broader regional and global processes, on the one hand, and local development dynamics, on the other, thus contributing to shape an original and region-specific profile.

#### *1.2.2.1. From fragmentation to integration: transition, the Lisbon Agenda and university*

Before 1989, Central and Eastern Europe experienced a relative harmonization of higher education systems as a consequence of the Soviet domination and the transfer of Soviet education practices and principles to other countries of the "Eastern bloc"<sup>4</sup>.

Higher education and culture were two key factors in building regime legitimacy (Russo 2003) and the status and rewards associated to loyal intellectuals were signs of a privileged position in society, thus encouraging compliance to the ruling élite (Fox and Petery 2000). For instance, according to the model of *Vyshshaya Attestacionnaya Komisya* (the Soviet Assessment Commission), the creation of national evaluation systems of political allegiance was an attempt to institutionalise ideological control on higher education (Hufner 1995). It is questioned how successful these policies were (Connelly 2000), as national linguistic and cultural specificities, the bureaucratic limits to a complete control and management of cultural and educational processes, the often insufficient qualifications of the Soviet officers in charge of representing the

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed account of education systems transformation in Central and South Eastern European Countries, see: Russo F., *Una scuola per entrare in Europa*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2005. The volume was published as a part of Progetto UNIVERSITAS. The sections of the book regarding national higher education systems is briefly resumed in the following chapter.



USSR in Central and Eastern European Countries's education systems, allowed a certain degree of self-organisation of national intellectual élites. However, homogeneous features surely emerged in the Central and Eastern European context: unification of curricula, nationalisation of schools, the development of networks of schools and programmes, including tertiary education, according to the so-called polytechnic principle, which links theoretical education to productive work in all segments of the system, the stronger duality between universities and academies of sciences, are characteristic for the period of the communist regime.

After 1989, the region enjoyed a "return to diversity" (Rothschild 1993), which meant also a fragmentation of the previously (relatively) homogeneous systems, but, due to economic crisis and restructuring, their substantive deterioration too. Thanks to Pre-Accession and Accession processes to EU, the Stabilisation process in Western Balkans, a contrasting trend towards integration was established. Setting the goal to make Europe the most competitive knowledge economy worldwide by 2010, the 2000 Lisbon European Council called on Member States to implement this Lisbon Agenda and education at all levels has been considered as a key factor for reaching the Lisbon goals. The Lisbon Strategy set a broad political horizon, whose reach was far beyond the Member States of the European Union.

The conclusions of the Lisbon Council established an Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) to facilitate the achievement of the goals. "This method, which is designed to help Member States to progressively develop their own policies, involves:

§ fixing guidelines for the Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals which they set, in the short, medium and long term;

§ establishing, where appropriate quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks against the best in the world and tailored to the needs of different Member States and sectors as a means of comparing best practice;

§ translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies by setting specific targets and adopting measures, taking into account national and regional differences;

§ periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review, organised as mutual learning processes."<sup>5</sup>

We do not want here to appraise the effectiveness of the Open Method of Coordination and Member States performance in implementing the Lisbon goals<sup>6</sup>, but to observe how the role of university is defined in the Lisbon framework and how the features of this definition are related to the characteristics of the International Political Economy of globalisation.

In European Commission and Council documents, universities are recurrently considered as key actors in knowledge societies and their central role is based on the specific features of knowledge economy and society. "The knowledge economy and society stem from the combination of four interdependent elements: the production of knowledge, mainly through scientific research; its transmission through education

<sup>5</sup> Presidency Conclusions, Lisbon Council, paragraph 37.

<sup>6</sup> See for instance Kok, W. (2004), *Facing the challenge: the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment*, Brussels: European Commission and Communication to the Spring European Council "Working together for growth and jobs. A new start for the Lisbon strategy" COM(2005) 24, 2 February 2005.

and training; its dissemination through the information and communication technologies; its use in technological innovation. At the same time, new configurations of production, transmission and application of knowledge are emerging, and their effect is to involve a greater number of players, typically in an increasingly internationalised network-driven context<sup>7</sup>. As universities act at the crossroads of research, education and innovation, in many respects they are considered to hold the key to the knowledge economy and society<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, European documents profusely assess the challenges and the critical changes of European university systems and, in line with the Open Method Cooperation (OMC), outline recommendations and standards for Member States, which recall the competition-driven reforms we described in the previous section. For instance, the Commission Communication on “Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon strategy” suggests, among others, the following policy guidelines:

§ the reform of university funding, by adopting a new mix of financial sources (different proportions of public support, including research contract awarded; private donations; commercialisation of research results; contributions from students<sup>9</sup>) and by favouring competition-based funding in research and output related funding in education;

§ the blend of equity and efficiency by introducing tuition fees for university attendance with accompanying financial measures for the disadvantages<sup>10</sup>;

§ the new ‘contract’ between university and society, “whereby they are responsible and accountable for their programmes, staff and resources, while public authorities focus on the strategic orientation of the system as a whole”<sup>11</sup>;

§ more flexibility and openness to the world in teaching/learning, by reforming profoundly the curricula “not just to ensure the highest level of academic content, but also to respond to the changing needs of labour markets”.

### *1.2.2.2. The Bologna Process and Central and Eastern Europe*

In the 1990s, the European higher education system experienced great changes and new challenges. The growth of enrolments, the increase in international mobility in Europe of students and teaching staff, the growing global competition in tertiary education, generated an increasing need of international collaboration among universities.

<sup>7</sup> Communication from the Commission “The role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge” COM(2003)58 final, 5 March 2003, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> For example, see: Communication from the Commission “The role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge” COM(2003)58 final, 5 March 2003, p.5 and Communication from the Commission “Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon strategy” COM(2005)152 final, 20 April 2005.

<sup>9</sup> See also Communication from the Commission “The role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge” COM(2003) 58 final, 5 March 2003, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> See also Communication from the Commission “Efficiency and equity in European education and training system” COM(2006) 481 final, 8 September 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Communication from the Commission “Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon strategy” COM(2005)152 final, 20 April 2005, p. 7.

In this context, what has been called as “the greatest transformation since the foundation of the first universities in the Medieval age” (Zgaga 2005) was launched: the European strategy of cooperation in higher education named “the Bologna Process”. Referring to the Sorbonne Declaration (1998), the process started in Bologna in 1999 and developed through the later meeting of Prague (2001), Berlin (2003) and Bergen (2005). Now partners in the Bologna Process are 45 from Portugal to Russia.

Therefore, strictly speaking, the Bologna process is not a EU process, but an inter-governmental effort by a number of countries that largely surpass the number of EU member states. Decision-making in the Bologna Process is thus carried out through an ‘intergovernmental’ process by Ministers from participating countries at biennial summits. Decisions are reached through consensus of the participating countries involved. This approach acknowledges the diversity in and the national responsibility for Europe’s Higher Education systems. Nevertheless, the current EU Presidency chairs the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), with the host country of the next ministerial summit as Vice-Chair, whose role is to help signatory countries to follow up on the recommendations made at the ministerial summits and to produce an official work programme on priority issues.

Having a closer look at goals and priorities of the Bologna Process, the Declaration of June 1999 started a series of reforms needed to make European Higher Education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive for European citizens and for citizens and scholars from other continents. The Bologna Process aims at creating a European Higher Education Area by 2010. It is underpinned by the following ten “action lines”:

1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
2. Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles
3. Establishment of a system of credits
4. Promotion of mobility
5. Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance
6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education
7. Focus on lifelong learning
8. Inclusion of higher education institutions and students
9. Promotion of the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area
10. Doctoral studies and the synergy between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area.

The aim of the European Higher Education Area is to provide citizens with choices from a wide and transparent range of high quality courses and benefit from easier recognition procedures.

In this framework, the priorities for the next Bologna Ministerial Meeting (London, 2007) are: the relation between higher education and research, the social dimension of European Higher Education, mobility and the global projection of European Higher Education Area, i.e. the attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world.

Concerning the relation with the European Commission work and the Lisbon strategy, the latter encompasses the Commission’s contribution to the Bologna Process, mainly in the areas of curricular reform and quality assurance. However, the Bologna process coincides with Commission policy in higher education supported

through European programmes and notably Socrates-Erasmus, Tempus and Erasmus Mundus, as well as the new generation of programmes. The Commission stimulates Bologna initiatives at European level and participates as a full member in the Bologna Follow-up Group and the Bologna Board.

### *1.2.3. Local development and higher education*

The third group of trends shaping the environment of higher education concerns the local setting of university activities and is aptly described through a territorial perspective. In fact, it is in local development dynamics that the global and regional trends find their ultimate implementation and directly affect university structure and activities.

Decentralisation of public policies regarding education and the increasing centrality of economic and S&T regional policies, with a shift from sectors to territories as targets of development strategies (Crosta 2004), embed universities in their local environment. New external stakeholders are located in territories and such territories are explored in search of financial resources and new students (see for instance the strategy of delocalisation of Italian universities and the multiplication of university campuses). Moreover, multi-stakeholder local learning and research centres are one of the formats through which universities have attempted to institutionalise ‘Mode 2’ knowledge production (Jacob 2001).

In sum, the application of the knowledge economy paradigm to the territorial dimension and the acknowledgement of the socially distributed character of knowledge creation, emphasise the role of universities in regional and local development process, both as “knowledge reservoir”, so that “when constructing regional advantage, regional innovation performance may thus be strengthened by regional firms tapping into the knowledge reservoir of the local university against relatively few costs” (Asheim 2006, p. 57), and, more generally, as a part of “creative knowledge environments, which should organise knowledge creation and innovation oriented work among the different actors, at the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of the Triple-Helix” (Asheim 2006, p. 21)

As Etkowitz and his colleagues observe, “innovative regions are characterised by networks of people sharing information across boundary lines between firms in the same industrial sector and across sectors as they speed the development of new products”. Universities are placed firmly at the core of these crossroads: “more than a geographical, political or cultural entity, the new innovative region consists of a series of interactions that criss-cross firms, Universities, professional and business associations” (Etkowitz et al. in: Jacob and Hellström, 2000, p. 42).

## *1.3. Summary and conclusions*

The second section of this chapter attempted to describe some broad trends (global, regional, local), which seem crucial in shaping the environment of higher education institutions and the features of the university systems and which will be a constant

reference for the following chapters, as well as part of the knowledge base on which the proposals for university cooperation models will rely. These final paragraphs propose then a short summary to highlight the main notions presented:

§ in knowledge societies and economies, universities may be considered as organisations producing scientific-professional knowledge;

§ in knowledge societies and economies, the social mandate of universities requires that the produced scientific-professional knowledge gives a clear, direct, and substantial contribution to economic and social development;

§ globalisation pushes governments to approve reforms for increasing competition and for reducing public budgets in education, also fostering the processes of decentralisation and privatization of higher education;

§ socially-distributed, innovation and application oriented knowledge production gains momentum;

§ the new relationship between university and society, the new knowledge production processes and the increasing dependence from stakeholders other than nation states for funding, increase the number and importance of stakeholders to which higher education is required to be accountable;

§ easier (virtual and physical) mobility favours the process of internationalisation;

§ Central and Eastern European higher education systems are currently part of two distinct but related efforts of building an European Education and Research Area: the EU integration process, on the one hand, and the Bologna Process, on the other.

The following chapter attempts to offer a picture of how Higher Education in Central and South Eastern Europe changes also for adapting to this radically new environment.