Chapter 11

PIZZA BOLOGNESE Á LA RUSSE
The Promise and Peril of the Bologna Process in Russia

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1. INTRODUCTION

More than once the Bologna Process has inspired culinary metaphors. While creating a European super-state has not proven to be an easy task, predicting the qualities of the common European cuisine is particularly difficult. Evidently, cultures have already influenced each other’s eating habits to the point that depicting the truly traditional has become a hopeless task; and more change is in train. It remains to be seen whether the French will ever be able to digest the freedom fries so popular in new Europe, and what hidden agenda President Putin may have in making the world respect the original bœuf stroganoff, the recipe of which is still perhaps being kept in an undisclosed location somewhere in East Prussia under the close guard of the Federal Security Services, and out of the reach of former colleagues from Lithuania dieting on vegetarian tseppelins. Côtelette á la Kiev has still to join the equation, once the long term political goal of many Ukrainian academics is finally achieved and the new, orange Ukrainian Minister of Education is invited to sign the Declaration and join the Process known for its many meetings and abundant culinary delights:

Not for nothing did the forging of a “European higher education identity” begin in a city famous throughout the known world for its spaghetti with meat and tomato sauce. Nor that the delights of the fork should continue in the home-place of the potato dumpling (Prague), make obeisance to the Berlin home of the Eisbein (pig’s knuckle) and will, next year, assuage political appetite by feasting on Norwegian boiled cod at Bergen. The fusion of the delicious (national gastronomy) with the partially

digestible (the reconstruction of higher education in Europe) is in a very
soothe a radical innovation indeed (Neave 2004a).

How enticing the European menu is we would rather leave open, if for no
other reason than the very fact that, since the term \textit{process} amongst other
things entails continuous negotiation and re-negotiation of its goals, one will
only be able to describe the menu retrospectively, once it is all over, which is
no sooner than 2010. What we do know for certain, at least what we have
been told by the highest authority available on such matters, the former
Commissioner for Cultural and Educational Affairs of the European
Commission, is that “Bologna cannot be implemented \textit{à la carte}…” Once
invited to the table, the dear members of the \textit{Bologna Club} (Zgaga 2003) are
expected to eat everything, or otherwise be kindly asked to leave. The
obvious threat of that is that it may leave hungry both the orthodox lovers of
kosher food as well as those whose digestive systems are \textit{tuned} (Gonzales
and Wagenaar 2003) to junk. But not only that, sitting at the European table
also requires the right attitude:

It has to be done across the board and wholeheartedly. If not, the process
will leave European higher education even less strong and united than
before (Reding 2003).

Shame on those whose limited appetite for Bologna or Eisbein threatens
the future of the entire continent.

The Europe of the Bologna Process makes a more diverse group of
countries than most of its ideologues dare to accept openly. From
Scandinavia, through Great Britain, continental Europe, Albania and Russia
it perhaps covers as wide a range of quality, as well as issues and problems
that one could probably identify anywhere in the world. Making a European
system of higher education out of that is an extremely challenging task
indeed. While some of the countries are proud of their \textit{haute cuisine} and see
little reason for any change, for others opening a \textit{western} fast-food outlet, a
MacDonald’s or a pizza restaurant, would mark a significant step forward.
The country discussed in this chapter, the Russian Federation, belongs to the
latter category. Despite its own continued claim to offer the highest level of
scholarship available anywhere in the solar system, it has experienced
massive difficulties over the past fifteen years in sustaining its higher
education, not to mention reforming it in the wake of the disintegration of
the state-socialist political régime and the Bolshevik empire.

Despite being but a poor man’s repast, \textit{Pizza Bolognese à la Russe} is a
complex piece of culinary art. As we have argued elsewhere (Tomusk
2004a) the Bologna Process is being driven by three relatively independent
forces: the cultural, political and economic agendas. In Russia, as in many
other places, there is consequently more than one chef in the kitchen. Whilst