

The logo for the Bologna Process, featuring the text "Bologna Process" in a blue, sans-serif font. The word "Bologna" is on the top line and "Process" is on the bottom line. The letters are decorated with blue and yellow stars, and the word "Process" is written in a larger, bolder font. The logo is set against a white background.

Bologna Process

Conventions

Declarations

Communicates



European Treaty Series - No. 165

**CONVENTION ON THE RECOGNITION
OF QUALIFICATIONS CONCERNING
HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE
EUROPEAN REGION**

Lisbon, 11.IV.1997

The Parties to this Convention,

Conscious of the fact that the right to education is a human right, and that higher education, which is instrumental in the pursuit and advancement of knowledge, constitutes an exceptionally rich cultural and scientific asset for both individuals and society;

Considering that higher education should play a vital role in promoting peace, mutual understanding and tolerance, and in creating mutual confidence among peoples and nations;

Considering that the great diversity of education systems in the European region reflects its cultural, social, political, philosophical, religious and economic diversity, an exceptional asset which should be fully respected;

Desiring to enable all people of the region to benefit fully from this rich asset of diversity by facilitating access by the inhabitants of each State and by the students of each Party's educational institutions to the educational resources of the other Parties, more specifically by facilitating their efforts to continue their education or to complete a period of studies in higher education institutions in those other Parties;

Considering that the recognition of studies, certificates, diplomas and degrees obtained in another country of the European region represents an important measure for promoting academic mobility between the Parties;

Attaching great importance to the principle of institutional autonomy, and conscious of the need to uphold and protect this principle;

Convinced that a fair recognition of qualifications is a key element of the right to education and a responsibility of society;

Having regard to the Council of Europe and UNESCO Conventions covering academic recognition in Europe:

European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities (1953, ETS No. 15), and its Protocol (1964, ETS No. 49);

European Convention on the Equivalence of Periods of University Study (1956, ETS No. 21);

European Convention on the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications (1959, ETS No. 32);

Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region (1979);

European Convention on the General Equivalence of Periods of University Study (1990, ETS No. 138);

Having regard also to the International Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean (1976), adopted within the framework of UNESCO and partially covering academic recognition in Europe;

Mindful that this Convention should also be considered in the context of the UNESCO conventions and the International Recommendation covering other Regions of the world, and of the need for an improved exchange of information between these Regions;

Conscious of the wide ranging changes in higher education in the European region since these Conventions were adopted, resulting in considerably increased diversification within and between national higher education systems, and of the need to adapt the legal instruments and practice to reflect these developments;

Conscious of the need to find common solutions to practical recognition problems in the European region;

Conscious of the need to improve current recognition practice and to make it more transparent and better adapted to the current situation of higher education in the European region;

Confident of the positive significance of a Convention elaborated and adopted under the joint auspices of the Council of Europe and UNESCO providing a framework for the further development of recognition practices in the European region;

Conscious of the importance of providing permanent implementation mechanisms in order to put the principles and provisions of the current Convention into practice,

Have agreed as follows:

Section I. Definitions

Article I

For the purposes of this Convention, the following terms shall have the following meaning:

Access (to higher education)

The right of qualified candidates to apply and to be considered for admission to higher education.

Admission (to higher education institutions and programmes)

The act of, or system for, allowing qualified applicants to pursue studies in higher education at a given institution and/or a given programme.

Assessment (of institutions or programmes)

The process for establishing the educational quality of a higher education institution or programme.

Assessment (of individual qualifications)

The written appraisal or evaluation of an individual's foreign qualifications by a competent body.

Competent recognition authority

A body officially charged with making binding decisions on the recognition of foreign qualifications.

Higher education

All types of courses of study, or sets of courses of study, training or training for research at the post secondary level which are recognized by the relevant authorities of a Party as belonging to its higher education system.

Higher education institution

An establishment providing higher education and recognized by the competent authority of a Party as belonging to its system of higher education.

Higher education programme

A course of study recognized by the competent authority of a Party as belonging to its system of higher education, and the completion of which provides the student with a higher education qualification.

Period of study

Any component of a higher education programme which has been evaluated and documented and, while not a complete programme of study in itself, represents a significant acquisition of knowledge or skill.

Qualification**A. Higher education qualification**

Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme.

B. Qualification giving access to higher education

Any diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of an education programme and giving the holder of the qualification the right to be considered for admission to higher education (cf. the definition of access).

Recognition

A formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of a foreign educational qualification with a view to access to educational and/or employment activities.

Requirement

A. General requirements

Conditions that must in all cases be fulfilled for access to higher education, or to a given level thereof, or for the award of a higher education qualification at a given level.

B. Specific requirements

Conditions that must be fulfilled, in addition to the general requirements, in order to gain admission to a particular higher education programme, or for the award of a specific higher education qualification in a particular field of study.

Section II. The competence of authorities

Article II.1

- 1 Where central authorities of a Party are competent to make decisions in recognition cases, that Party shall be immediately bound by the provisions of this Convention and shall take the necessary measures to ensure the implementation of its provisions on its territory.

Where the competence to make decisions in recognition matters lies with components of the Party, the Party shall furnish one of the depositaries with a brief statement of its constitutional situation or structure at the time of signature or when depositing its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, or any time thereafter. In such cases, the competent authorities of the components of the Parties so designated shall take the necessary measures to ensure implementation of the provisions of this Convention on their territory.

- 2 Where the competence to make decisions in recognition matters lies with individual higher education institutions or other entities, each Party according to its constitutional situation or structure shall transmit the text of this convention to these institutions or entities and shall take all possible steps to encourage the favourable consideration and application of its provisions.
- 3 The provisions of paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article shall apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the obligations of the Parties under subsequent articles of this Convention.

Article II.2

At the time of signature or when depositing its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, or at any time thereafter, each State, the Holy See or the European Community shall inform either depositary of the present Convention of the authorities which are competent to make different categories of decisions in recognition cases.

Article II.3

Nothing in this Convention shall be deemed to derogate from any more favourable provisions concerning the recognition of qualifications issued in one of the Parties contained in or stemming from an existing or a future treaty to which a Party to this Convention may be or may become a party.

Section III. Basic principles related to the assessment of qualifications**Article III.1**

- 1 Holders of qualifications issued in one of the Parties shall have adequate access, upon request to the appropriate body, to an assessment of these qualifications.
- 2 No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status, or on the grounds of any other circumstance not related to the merits of the qualification for which recognition is sought. In order to assure this right, each Party undertakes to make appropriate arrangements for the assessment of an application for recognition of qualifications solely on the basis of the knowledge and skills achieved.

Article III.2

Each Party shall ensure that the procedures and criteria used in the assessment and recognition of qualifications are transparent, coherent and reliable.

Article III.3

- 1 Decisions on recognition shall be made on the basis of appropriate information on the qualifications for which recognition is sought.
- 2 In the first instance, the responsibility for providing adequate information rests with the applicant, who shall provide such information in good faith.
- 3 Notwithstanding the responsibility of the applicant, the institutions having issued the qualifications in question shall have a duty to provide, upon request of the applicant and within reasonable limits, relevant information to the holder of the qualification, to the institution, or to the competent authorities of the country in which recognition is sought.
- 4 The Parties shall instruct or encourage, as appropriate, all education institutions belonging to their education systems to comply with any reasonable request for information for the purpose of assessing qualifications earned at the said institutions.
- 5 The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfil the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.

Article III.4

Each Party shall ensure, in order to facilitate the recognition of qualifications, that adequate and clear information on its education system is provided.

Article III.5

Decisions on recognition shall be made within a reasonable time limit specified beforehand by the competent recognition authority and calculated from the time all necessary information in the case has been provided. If recognition is withheld, the reasons for the refusal to grant recognition shall be stated, and information shall be given concerning possible measures the applicant may take in order to obtain recognition at a later stage. If recognition is withheld, or if no decision is taken, the applicant shall be able to make an appeal within a reasonable time limit.

Section IV. Recognition of qualifications giving access to higher education**Article IV.1**

Each Party shall recognize the qualifications issued by other Parties meeting the general requirements for access to higher education in those Parties for the purpose of access to programmes belonging to its higher education system, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the general requirements for access in the Party in which the qualification was obtained and in the Party in which recognition of the qualification is sought.

Article IV.2

Alternatively, it shall be sufficient for a Party to enable the holder of a qualification issued in one of the other Parties to obtain an assessment of that qualification, upon request by the holder, and the provisions of Article IV.1 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to such a case.

Article IV.3

Where a qualification gives access only to specific types of institutions or programmes of higher education in the Party in which the qualification was obtained, each other Party shall grant holders of such qualifications access to similar specific programmes in institutions belonging to its higher education system, unless a substantial difference can be demonstrated between the requirements for access in the Party in which the qualification was obtained and the Party in which recognition of the qualification is sought.

Article IV.4

Where admission to particular higher education programmes is dependent on the fulfilment of specific requirements in addition to the general requirements for access, the competent authorities of the Party concerned may impose the additional requirements equally on holders of qualifications obtained in the other Parties or assess whether applicants with qualifications obtained in other Parties fulfil equivalent requirements.

Article IV.5

Where, in the Party in which they have been obtained, school leaving certificates give access to higher education only in combination with additional qualifying examinations as a prerequisite for access, the other Parties may make access conditional on these requirements or offer an alternative for satisfying such additional requirements within their own educational systems. Any State, the Holy See or the European Community may, at the time of signature or when depositing its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, or at any time thereafter, notify one of the depositaries that it avails itself of the provisions of this Article, specifying the Parties in regard to which it intends to apply this Article as well as the reasons therefor.

Article IV.6

Without prejudice to the provisions of Articles IV.1, IV.2, IV.3, IV.4 and IV.5, admission to a given higher education institution, or to a given programme within such an institution, may be restricted or selective. In cases in which admission to a higher education institution and/or programme is selective, admission procedures should be designed with a view to ensuring that the assessment of foreign qualifications is carried out according to the principles of fairness and non-discrimination described in Section III.

Article IV.7

Without prejudice to the provisions of Articles IV.1, IV.2, IV.3, IV.4 and IV.5, admission to a given higher education institution may be made conditional on demonstration by the applicant of sufficient competence in the language or languages of instruction of the institution concerned, or in other specified languages.

Article IV.8

In the Parties in which access to higher education may be obtained on the basis of non-traditional qualifications, similar qualifications obtained in other Parties shall be assessed in a similar manner as non-traditional qualifications earned in the Party in which recognition is sought.

Article IV.9

For the purpose of admission to programmes of higher education, each Party may make the recognition of qualifications issued by foreign educational institutions operating in its territory contingent upon specific requirements of national legislation or specific agreements concluded with the Party of origin of such institutions.

Section V. Recognition of periods of study**Article V.1**

Each Party shall recognize periods of study completed within the framework of a higher education programme in another Party. This recognition shall comprise such periods of study towards the completion of a higher education programme in the Party in which recognition is sought, unless substantial differences can be shown between the periods of study completed in another Party and the part of the higher education programme which they would replace in the Party in which recognition is sought.

Article V.2

Alternatively, it shall be sufficient for a Party to enable a person who has completed a period of study within the framework of a higher education programme in another Party to obtain an assessment of that period of study, upon request by the person concerned, and the provisions of Article V.1 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to such a case.

Article V.3

In particular, each Party shall facilitate recognition of periods of study when:

- a there has been a previous agreement between, on the one hand, the higher education institution or the competent authority responsible for the relevant period of study and, on the other hand, the higher education institution or the competent recognition authority responsible for the recognition that is sought; and
- b the higher education institution in which the period of study has been completed has issued a certificate or transcript of academic records attesting that the student has successfully completed the stipulated requirements for the said period of study.

Section VI. Recognition of higher education qualifications**Article VI.1**

To the extent that a recognition decision is based on the knowledge and skills certified by the higher education qualification, each Party shall recognize the higher education qualifications conferred in another Party, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the qualification for which recognition is sought and the corresponding qualification in the Party in which recognition is sought.

Article VI.2

Alternatively, it shall be sufficient for a Party to enable the holder of a higher education qualification issued in one of the other Parties to obtain an assessment of that qualification, upon request by the holder, and the provisions of Article VI.1 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to such a case.

Article VI.3

Recognition in a Party of a higher education qualification issued in another Party shall have one or both of the following consequences:

- a access to further higher education studies, including relevant examinations, and/or to preparations for the doctorate, on the same conditions as those applicable to holders of qualifications of the Party in which recognition is sought;
- b the use of an academic title, subject to the laws and regulations of the Party or a jurisdiction thereof, in which recognition is sought.

In addition, recognition may facilitate access to the labour market subject to laws and regulations of the Party, or a jurisdiction thereof, in which recognition is sought.

Article VI.4

An assessment in a Party of a higher education qualification issued in another Party may take the form of:

- a advice for general employment purposes;
- b advice to an educational institution for the purpose of admission into its programmes;
- c advice to any other competent recognition authority.

Article VI.5

Each Party may make the recognition of higher education qualifications issued by foreign educational institutions operating in its territory contingent upon specific requirements of national legislation or specific agreements concluded with the Party of origin of such institutions.

Section VII. Recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation

Article VII

Each Party shall take all feasible and reasonable steps within the framework of its education system and in conformity with its constitutional, legal, and regulatory provisions to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education, to further higher education programmes or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications obtained in one of the Parties cannot be proven through documentary evidence.

Section VIII. Information on the assessment of higher education institutions and programmes

Article VIII.1

Each Party shall provide adequate information on any institution belonging to its higher education system, and on any programme operated by these institutions, with a view to enabling the competent authorities of other Parties to ascertain whether the quality of the qualifications issued by these institutions justifies recognition in the Party in which recognition is sought. Such information shall take the following form:

- a in the case of Parties having established a system of formal assessment of higher education institutions and programmes: information on the methods and results of this assessment, and of the standards of quality specific to each type of higher education institution granting, and to programmes leading to, higher education qualifications;
- b in the case of Parties which have not established a system of formal assessment of higher education institutions and programmes: information on the recognition of the various qualifications obtained at any higher education institution, or within any higher education programme, belonging to their higher education systems.

Article VIII.2

Each Party shall make adequate provisions for the development, maintenance and provision of:

- a an overview of the different types of higher education institutions belonging to its higher education system, with the typical characteristics of each type of institution;
- b a list of recognized institutions (public and private) belonging to its higher education system, indicating their powers to award different types of qualifications and the requirements for gaining access to each type of institution and programme;
- c a description of higher education programmes;
- d a list of educational institutions located outside its territory which the Party considers as belonging to its education system.

Section IX. Information on recognition matters

Article IX.1

In order to facilitate the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education, the Parties undertake to establish transparent systems for the complete description of the qualifications obtained.

Article IX.2

- 1 Acknowledging the need for relevant, accurate and up-to-date information, each Party shall establish or maintain a national information centre and shall notify one of the depositaries of its establishment, or of any changes affecting it.
- 2 In each Party, the national information centre shall:
 - a facilitate access to authoritative and accurate information on the higher education system and qualifications of the country in which it is located;
 - b facilitate access to information on the higher education systems and qualifications of the other Parties;
 - c give advice or information on recognition matters and assessment of qualifications, in accordance with national laws and regulations.

- 3 Every national information centre shall have at its disposal the necessary means to enable it to fulfil its functions.

Article IX.3

The Parties shall promote, through the national information centres or otherwise, the use of the UNESCO/Council of Europe Diploma Supplement or any other comparable document by the higher education institutions of the Parties.

Section X. Implementation mechanisms

Article X.1

The following bodies shall oversee, promote and facilitate the implementation of the Convention:

- a the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region;
- b the European Network of National Information Centres on academic mobility and recognition (the ENIC Network), established by decision of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 9 June 1994 and the UNESCO Regional Committee for Europe on 18 June 1994.

Article X.2

- 1 The Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (hereafter referred to as "the Committee") is hereby established. It shall be composed of one representative of each Party.
- 2 For the purposes of Article X.2, the term "Party" shall not apply to the European Community.
- 3 The States mentioned in Article XI.1.1 and the Holy See, if they are not Parties to this Convention, the European Community and the President of the ENIC Network may participate in the meetings of the Committee as observers. Representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the field of recognition in the Region may also be invited to attend meetings of the Committee as observers.
- 4 The President of the UNESCO Regional Committee for the Application of the Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region shall also be invited to participate in the meetings of the Committee as an observer.
- 5 The Committee shall promote the application of this Convention and shall oversee its implementation. To this end it may adopt, by a majority of the Parties, recommendations, declarations, protocols and models of good practice to guide the competent authorities of the Parties in their implementation of the Convention and in their consideration of applications for the recognition of higher education qualifications. While they shall not be bound by such texts, the Parties shall use their best endeavours to apply them, to bring the texts to the attention of the competent authorities and to encourage their application. The Committee shall seek the opinion of the ENIC Network before making its decisions.
- 6 The Committee shall report to the relevant bodies of the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

- 7 The Committee shall maintain links to the UNESCO Regional Committees for the Application of Conventions on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education adopted under the auspices of UNESCO.
- 8 A majority of the Parties shall constitute a quorum.
- 9 The Committee shall adopt its Rules of Procedure. It shall meet in ordinary session at least every three years. The Committee shall meet for the first time within a year of the entry into force of this Convention.
- 10 The Secretariat of the Committee shall be entrusted jointly to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and to the Director-General of UNESCO.

Article X.3

- 1 Each Party shall appoint as a member of the European network of national information centres on academic mobility and recognition (the ENIC Network) the national information centre established or maintained under Article IX.2. In cases in which more than one national information centre is established or maintained in a Party under Article IX.2, all these shall be members of the Network, but the national information centres concerned shall dispose of only one vote.
- 2 The ENIC Network shall, in its composition restricted to national information centres of the Parties to this Convention, uphold and assist the practical implementation of the Convention by the competent national authorities. The Network shall meet at least once a year in plenary session. It shall elect its President and Bureau in accordance with its terms of reference.
- 3 The Secretariat of the ENIC Network shall be entrusted jointly to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and to the Director-General of UNESCO.
- 4 The Parties shall cooperate, through the ENIC Network, with the national information centres of other Parties, especially by enabling them to collect all information of use to the national information centres in their activities relating to academic recognition and mobility.

Section XI. Final clauses

Article XI.1

- 1 This Convention shall be open for signature by:
 - a the member States of the Council of Europe;
 - b the member States of the UNESCO Europe Region;
 - c any other signatory, contracting State or party to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe and/or to the UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region,which have been invited to the Diplomatic Conference entrusted with the adoption of this Convention.
- 2 These States and the Holy See may express their consent to be bound by:

- a signature without reservation as to ratification, acceptance or approval; or
 - b signature, subject to ratification, acceptance or approval, followed by ratification, acceptance or approval; or
 - c accession.
- 3 Signatures shall be made with one of the depositaries. Instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession shall be deposited with one of the depositaries.

Article XI.2

This Convention shall enter into force on the first day of the month following the expiration of the period of one month after five States, including at least three member States of the Council of Europe and/or the UNESCO Europe Region, have expressed their consent to be bound by the Convention. It shall enter into force for each other State on the first day of the month following the expiration of the period of one month after the date of expression of its consent to be bound by the Convention.

Article XI.3

- 1 After the entry into force of this Convention, any State other than those falling into one of the categories listed under Article XI.1 may request accession to this Convention. Any request to this effect shall be addressed to one of the depositaries, who shall transmit it to the Parties at least three months before the meeting of the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. The depositary shall also inform the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Executive Board of UNESCO.
- 2 The decision to invite a State which so requests to accede to this Convention shall be taken by a two-thirds majority of the Parties.
- 3 After the entry into force of this Convention the European Community may accede to it following a request by its member States, which shall be addressed to one of the depositaries. In this case, Article XI.3.2 shall not apply.
- 4 In respect of any acceding States or the European Community, the Convention shall enter into force on the first day of the month following the expiration of the period of one month after the deposit of the instrument of accession with one of the depositaries.

Article XI.4

- 1 Parties to this Convention which are at the same time parties to one or more of the following Conventions:
 - European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities (1953, ETS No. 15), and its Protocol (1964, ETS No. 49);
 - European Convention on the Equivalence of Periods of University Study (1956, ETS No. 21);
 - European Convention on the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications (1959, ETS No. 32);

International Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean (1976);

Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region (1979);

European Convention on the General Equivalence of Periods of University Study (1990, ETS No. 138),

- a shall apply the provisions of the present Convention in their mutual relations;
 - b shall continue to apply the above mentioned Conventions to which they are a party in their relations with other States party to those Conventions but not to the present Convention.
- 2 The Parties to this Convention undertake to abstain from becoming a party to any of the Conventions mentioned in paragraph 1, to which they are not already a party, with the exception of the International Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean.

Article XI.5

- 1 Any State may, at the time of signature or when depositing its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, specify the territory or territories to which this Convention shall apply.
- 2 Any State may, at any later date, by a declaration addressed to one of the depositaries, extend the application of this Convention to any other territory specified in the declaration. In respect of such territory the Convention shall enter into force on the first day of the month following the expiration of a period of one month after the date of receipt of such declaration by the depositary.
- 3 Any declaration made under the two preceding paragraphs may, in respect of any territory specified in such declaration, be withdrawn by a notification addressed to one of the depositaries. The withdrawal shall become effective on the first day of the month following the expiration of a period of one month after the date of receipt of such notification by the depositary.

Article XI.6

- 1 Any Party may, at any time, denounce this Convention by means of a notification addressed to one of the depositaries.
- 2 Such denunciation shall become effective on the first day of the month following the expiration of a period of twelve months after the date of receipt of the notification by the depositary. However, such denunciation shall not affect recognition decisions taken previously under the provisions of this Convention.
- 3 Termination or suspension of the operation of this Convention as a consequence of a violation by a Party of a provision essential to the accomplishment of the object or purpose of this Convention shall be addressed in accordance with international law.

Article XI.7

- 1 Any State, the Holy See or the European Community may, at the time of signature or when depositing its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, declare that it reserves the right not to apply, in whole or in part, one or more of the following Articles of this Convention:

Article IV.8

Article V.3

Article VI.3

Article VIII.2

Article IX.3

No other reservation may be made.

- 2 Any Party which has made a reservation under the preceding paragraph may wholly or partly withdraw it by means of a notification addressed to one of the depositaries. The withdrawal shall take effect on the date of receipt of such notification by the depositary.
- 3 A Party which has made a reservation in respect of a provision of this Convention may not claim the application of that provision by any other Party; it may, however, if its reservation is partial or conditional, claim the application of that provision in so far as it has itself accepted it.

Article XI.8

- 1 Draft amendments to this Convention may be adopted by the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region by a two-thirds majority of the Parties. Any draft amendment so adopted shall be incorporated into a Protocol to this Convention. The Protocol shall specify the modalities for its entry into force which, in any event, shall require the expression of consent by the Parties to be bound by it.
- 2 No amendment may be made to Section III of this Convention under the procedure of paragraph 1 above.
- 3 Any proposal for amendments shall be communicated to one of the depositaries, who shall transmit it to the Parties at least three months before the meeting of the Committee. The depositary shall also inform the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Executive Board of UNESCO.

Article XI.9

- 1 The Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization shall be the depositaries of this Convention.
- 2 The depositary with whom an act, notification or communication has been deposited shall notify the Parties to this Convention, as well as the other member States of the Council of Europe and/or of the UNESCO Europe Region of:
 - a any signature;
 - b the deposit of any instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession;

- c any date of entry into force of this Convention in accordance with the provisions of Articles XI.2 and XI.3.4;
 - d any reservation made in pursuance of the provisions of Article XI.7 and the withdrawal of any reservations made in pursuance of the provisions of Article XI.7;
 - e any denunciation of this Convention in pursuance of Article XI.6;
 - f any declarations made in accordance with the provisions of Article II.1, or of Article II.2;
 - g any declarations made in accordance with the provisions of Article IV.5;
 - h any request for accession made in accordance with the provisions of Article XI.3;
 - i any proposal made in accordance with the provisions of Article XI.8;
 - j any other act, notification or communication relating to this Convention.
- 3 The depositary receiving a communication or making a notification in pursuance of the provisions of this Convention shall immediately inform the other depositary thereof.

In witness thereof the undersigned representatives, being duly authorized, have signed this Convention.

Done at Lisbon on 11 April 1997, in the English, French, Russian and Spanish languages, the four texts being equally authoritative, in two copies, one of which shall be deposited in the archives of the Council of Europe and the other in the archives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. A certified copy shall be sent to all the States referred to in Article XI.1, to the Holy See and to the European Community and to the Secretariat of the United Nations.

Sorbonne Joint Declaration

Joint declaration on harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system

by the four Ministers in charge for France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom

Paris, the Sorbonne, May 25 1998

The European process has very recently moved some extremely important steps ahead. Relevant as they are, they should not make one forget that Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of knowledge as well. We must strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent. These have to a large extent been shaped by its universities, which continue to play a pivotal role for their development.

Universities were born in Europe, some three-quarters of a millenium ago. Our four countries boast some of the oldest, who are celebrating important anniversaries around now, as the University of Paris is doing today. In those times, students and academics would freely circulate and rapidly disseminate knowledge throughout the continent. Nowadays, too many of our students still graduate without having had the benefit of a study period outside of national boundaries.

We are heading for a period of major change in education and working conditions, to a diversification of courses of professional careers with education and training throughout life becoming a clear obligation. We owe our students, and our society at large, a higher education system in which they are given the best opportunities to seek and find their own area of excellence.

An open European area for higher learning carries a wealth of positive perspectives, of course respecting our diversities, but requires on the other hand continuous efforts to remove barriers and to develop a framework for teaching and learning, which would enhance mobility and an ever closer cooperation.

The international recognition and attractive potential of our systems are directly related to their external and internal readabilities. A system, in which two main

cycles, undergraduate and graduate, should be recognized for international comparison and equivalence, seems to emerge.

Much of the originality and flexibility in this system will be achieved through the use of credits (such as in the ECTS scheme) and semesters. This will allow for validation of these acquired credits for those who choose initial or continued education in different European universities and wish to be able to acquire degrees in due time throughout life. Indeed, students should be able to enter the academic world at any time in their professional life and from diverse backgrounds.

Undergraduates should have access to a diversity of programmes, including opportunities for multidisciplinary studies, development of a proficiency in languages and the ability to use new information technologies.

International recognition of the first cycle degree as an appropriate level of qualification is important for the success of this endeavour, in which we wish to make our higher education schemes clear to all.

In the graduate cycle there would be a choice between a shorter master's degree and a longer doctor's degree, with possibilities to transfer from one to the other. In both graduate degrees, appropriate emphasis would be placed on research and autonomous work.

At both undergraduate and graduate level, students would be encouraged to spend at least one semester in universities outside their own country. At the same time, more teaching and research staff should be working in European countries other than their own. The fast growing support of the European Union, for the mobility of students and teachers should be employed to the full.

Most countries, not only within Europe, have become fully conscious of the need to foster such evolution. The conferences of European rectors, University presidents, and groups of experts and academics in our respective countries have engaged in widespread thinking along these lines.

A convention, recognising higher education qualifications in the academic field within Europe, was agreed on last year in Lisbon. The convention set a number of basic requirements and acknowledged that individual countries could engage in an even more constructive scheme. Standing by these conclusions, one can build on them and go further. There is already much common ground for the

mutual recognition of higher education degrees for professional purposes through the respective directives of the European Union.

Our governments, nevertheless, continue to have a significant role to play to these ends, by encouraging ways in which acquired knowledge can be validated and respective degrees can be better recognised. We expect this to promote further inter-university agreements. Progressive harmonisation of the overall framework of our degrees and cycles can be achieved through strengthening of already existing experience, joint diplomas, pilot initiatives, and dialogue with all concerned.

We hereby commit ourselves to encouraging a common frame of reference, aimed at improving external recognition and facilitating student mobility as well as employability. The anniversary of the University of Paris, today here in the Sorbonne, offers us a solemn opportunity to engage in the endeavour to create a European area of higher education, where national identities and common interests can interact and strengthen each other for the benefit of Europe, of its students, and more generally of its citizens. We call on other Member States of the Union and other European countries to join us in this objective and on all European Universities to consolidate Europe's standing in the world through continuously improved and updated education for its citizens.

Claude ALLEGRE

Minister for National
Education, Research
and Technology
(France)

**Luigi
BERLINGUER**

Minister for Public
Instruction,
University and
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**Tessa
BLACKSTONE**

Minister for Higher
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**Jürgen
RÜTTGERS**

Minister for
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The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999

Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education

The European process, thanks to the extraordinary achievements of the last few years, has become an increasingly concrete and relevant reality for the Union and its citizens. Enlargement prospects together with deepening relations with other European countries, provide even wider dimensions to that reality. Meanwhile, we are witnessing a growing awareness in large parts of the political and academic world and in public opinion of the need to establish a more complete and far-reaching Europe, in particular building upon and strengthening its intellectual, cultural, social and scientific and technological dimensions.

A Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognised as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competences to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space.

The importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount, the more so in view of the situation in South East Europe.

The Sorbonne declaration of 25th of May 1998, which was underpinned by these considerations, stressed the Universities' central role in developing European cultural dimensions. It emphasised the creation of the European area of higher education as a key way to promote citizens' mobility and employability and the

Continent's overall development.

Several European countries have accepted the invitation to commit themselves to achieving the objectives set out in the declaration, by signing it or expressing their agreement in principle. The direction taken by several higher education reforms launched in the meantime in Europe has proved many Governments' determination to act.

European higher education institutions, for their part, have accepted the challenge and taken up a main role in constructing the European area of higher education, also in the wake of the fundamental principles laid down in the Bologna Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988. This is of the highest importance, given that Universities' independence and autonomy ensure that higher education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society's demands and advances in scientific knowledge.

The course has been set in the right direction and with meaningful purpose. The achievement of greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education nevertheless requires continual momentum in order to be fully accomplished. We need to support it through promoting concrete measures to achieve tangible forward steps. The 18th June meeting saw participation by authoritative experts and scholars from all our countries and provides us with very useful suggestions on the initiatives to be taken.

We must in particular look at the objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education. The vitality and efficiency of any civilisation can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries. We need to ensure that the European higher education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary

cultural and scientific traditions.

While affirming our support to the general principles laid down in the Sorbonne declaration, we engage in co-ordinating our policies to reach in the short term, and in any case within the first decade of the third millennium, the following objectives, which we consider to be of primary relevance in order to establish the European area of higher education and to promote the European system of higher education world-wide:

Adoption of a system of **easily readable and comparable degrees**, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system

Adoption of a system essentially based on **two main cycles**, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries.

Establishment of a **system of credits** - such as in the ECTS system - as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. Credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, provided they are recognised by receiving Universities concerned.

Promotion of **mobility** by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to:

- for students, access to study and training opportunities and to related services

- for teachers, researchers and administrative staff, recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights.

Promotion of **European co-operation in quality assurance** with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.

Promotion of the **necessary European dimensions in higher education**, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.

We hereby undertake to attain these objectives - within the framework of our institutional competences and taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of University autonomy - to consolidate the European area of higher education. To that end, we will pursue the ways of intergovernmental co-operation, together with those of non governmental European organisations with competence on higher education. We expect Universities again to respond promptly and positively and to contribute actively to the success of our endeavour.

Convinced that the establishment of the European area of higher education requires constant support, supervision and adaptation to the continuously evolving needs, we decide to meet again within two years in order to assess the progress achieved and the new steps to be taken.

Signatories:

Caspar EINEM Minister of Science and Transport (Austria)	
Jan ADE Director General Ministry of the Flemish Community Department of Education (Belgium)	Gerard SCHMIT Director General of French Community Ministry for Higher Education and Research (Belgium)
Eduard ZEMAN Minister of Education, Youth and Sport (Czech Republic)	Anna Mmia TOTOMANOVA Vice Minister of Education and Science (Bulgaria)
Tonis LUKAS Minister of Education (Estonia)	Margrethe VESTAGER Minister of Education (Denmark)
Claude ALLEGRE Minister of National Education, Research and Technology (France)	Maija RASK Minister of Education and Science (Finland)
Ute ERDSIEK-RAVE Minister of Education, Science, Research And Culture of the Land Schleswig-Holstein (Permanent Conference of the Ministers of Culture of the German Länders)	Wolf-Michael CATENHUSEN Parliamentary State Secretary Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Germany)
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Wilibald WINKLER Under Secretary of State of National Education (Poland)	Jon LILLETUN Minister of Education, Research and Church Affairs (Norway)
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Agneta BLADH State Secretary for Education and Science (Sweden)	D.Jorge FERNANDEZ DIAZ Secretary of State of Education, Universities, Research and Development (Spain)
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TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education

in Prague on May 19th 2001

Two years after signing the Bologna Declaration and three years after the Sorbonne Declaration, European Ministers in charge of higher education, representing 32 signatories, met in Prague in order to review the progress achieved and to set directions and priorities for the coming years of the process. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the objective of establishing the European Higher Education Area by 2010. The choice of Prague to hold this meeting is a symbol of their will to involve the whole of Europe in the process in the light of enlargement of the European Union.

Ministers welcomed and reviewed the report "Furthering the Bologna Process" commissioned by the follow-up group and found that the goals laid down in the Bologna Declaration have been widely accepted and used as a base for the development of higher education by most signatories as well as by universities and other higher education institutions. Ministers reaffirmed that efforts to promote mobility must be continued to enable students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff to benefit from the richness of the European Higher Education Area including its democratic values, diversity of cultures and languages and the diversity of the higher education systems.

Ministers took note of the Convention of European higher education institutions held in Salamanca on 29-30 March and the recommendations of the Convention of European Students, held in Göteborg on 24-25 March, and appreciated the active involvement of the European University Association (EUA) and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) in the Bologna process. They further noted and appreciated the many other initiatives to take the process further. Ministers also took note of the constructive assistance of the European Commission.

Ministers observed that the activities recommended in the Declaration concerning degree structure have been intensely and widely dealt with in most countries. They especially appreciated how the work on quality assurance is moving forward. Ministers recognized the need to cooperate to address the challenges brought about by transnational education. They also recognized the need for a lifelong learning perspective on education.

FURTHER ACTIONS FOLLOWING THE SIX OBJECTIVES OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

As the Bologna Declaration sets out, Ministers asserted that building the European Higher Education Area is a condition for enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education institutions in Europe. They supported the idea that higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.), and that students are full members of the higher education community. From this point of view Ministers commented on the further process as follows:

Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

Ministers strongly encouraged universities and other higher education institutions to take full advantage of existing national legislation and European tools aimed at facilitating academic and professional recognition of course units, degrees and other awards, so that citizens can effectively use their qualifications, competencies and skills throughout the European Higher Education Area.

Ministers called upon existing organisations and networks such as NARIC and ENIC to promote, at institutional, national and European level, simple, efficient and fair recognition reflecting the underlying diversity of qualifications.

Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles

Ministers noted with satisfaction that the objective of a degree structure based on two main

cycles, articulating higher education in undergraduate and graduate studies, has been tackled and discussed. Some countries have already adopted this structure and several others are considering it with great interest. It is important to note that in many countries bachelor's and master's degrees, or comparable two cycle degrees, can be obtained at universities as well as at other higher education institutions. Programmes leading to a degree may, and indeed should, have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs as concluded at the Helsinki seminar on bachelor level degrees (February 2001).

Establishment of a system of credits

Ministers emphasized that for greater flexibility in learning and qualification processes the adoption of common cornerstones of qualifications, supported by a credit system such as the ECTS or one that is ECTS-compatible, providing both transferability and accumulation functions, is necessary. Together with mutually recognized quality assurance systems such arrangements will facilitate students' access to the European labour market and enhance the compatibility, attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education. The generalized use of such a credit system and of the Diploma Supplement will foster progress in this direction.

Promotion of mobility

Ministers reaffirmed that the objective of improving the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff as set out in the Bologna Declaration is of the utmost importance. Therefore, they confirmed their commitment to pursue the removal of all obstacles to the free movement of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff and emphasized the social dimension of mobility. They took note of the possibilities for mobility offered by the European Community programmes and the progress achieved in this field, e.g. in launching the Mobility Action Plan endorsed by the European Council in Nice in 2000.

Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance

Ministers recognized the vital role that quality assurance systems play in ensuring high quality standards and in facilitating the comparability of qualifications throughout Europe. They also encouraged closer cooperation between recognition and quality assurance networks. They emphasized the necessity of close European cooperation and mutual trust in and acceptance of national quality assurance systems. Further they encouraged universities and other higher education institutions to disseminate examples of best practice and to design scenarios for mutual acceptance of evaluation and accreditation/certification mechanisms. Ministers called upon the universities and other higher education institutions, national agencies and the European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), in cooperation with corresponding bodies from countries which are not members of ENQA, to collaborate in establishing a common framework of reference and to disseminate best practice.

Promotion of the European dimensions in higher education

In order to further strengthen the important European dimensions of higher education and graduate employability Ministers called upon the higher education sector to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with "European" content, orientation or organisation. This concerns particularly modules, courses and degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognized joint degree.

FURTHERMORE MINISTERS EMPHASIZED THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area. In the future Europe, built upon a knowledge-based society and economy, lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life.

Higher education institutions and students

Ministers stressed that the involvement of universities and other higher education institutions and of students as competent, active and constructive partners in the establishment and

shaping of a European Higher Education Area is needed and welcomed. The institutions have demonstrated the importance they attach to the creation of a compatible and efficient, yet diversified and adaptable European Higher Education Area. Ministers also pointed out that quality is the basic underlying condition for trust, relevance, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness in the European Higher Education Area. Ministers expressed their appreciation of the contributions toward developing study programmes combining academic quality with relevance to lasting employability and called for a continued proactive role of higher education institutions.

Ministers affirmed that students should participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions. Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna process.

Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

Ministers agreed on the importance of enhancing attractiveness of European higher education to students from Europe and other parts of the world. The readability and comparability of European higher education degrees world-wide should be enhanced by the development of a common framework of qualifications, as well as by coherent quality assurance and accreditation/certification mechanisms and by increased information efforts.

Ministers particularly stressed that the quality of higher education and research is and should be an important determinant of Europe's international attractiveness and competitiveness.

Ministers agreed that more attention should be paid to the benefit of a European Higher Education Area with institutions and programmes with different profiles. They called for increased collaboration between the European countries concerning the possible implications and perspectives of transnational education.

CONTINUED FOLLOW-UP

Ministers committed themselves to continue their cooperation based on the objectives set out in the Bologna Declaration, building on the similarities and benefiting from the differences between cultures, languages and national systems, and drawing on all possibilities of intergovernmental cooperation and the ongoing dialogue with European universities and other higher education institutions and student organisations as well as the Community programmes.

Ministers welcomed new members to join the Bologna process after applications from Ministers representing countries for which the European Community programmes Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci or Tempus-Cards are open. They accepted applications from Croatia, Cyprus and Turkey.

Ministers decided that a new follow-up meeting will take place in the second half of 2003 in Berlin to review progress and set directions and priorities for the next stages of the process towards the European Higher Education Area. They confirmed the need for a structure for the follow-up work, consisting of a follow-up group and a preparatory group. The follow-up group should be composed of representatives of all signatories, new participants and the European Commission, and should be chaired by the EU Presidency at the time. The preparatory group should be composed of representatives of the countries hosting the previous ministerial meetings and the next ministerial meeting, two EU member states and two non-EU member states; these latter four representatives will be elected by the follow-up group. The EU Presidency at the time and the European Commission will also be part of the preparatory group. The preparatory group will be chaired by the representative of the country hosting the next ministerial meeting.

The European University Association, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the National Unions of Students in Europe and the Council of Europe should be consulted in the follow-up work.

In order to take the process further, Ministers encouraged the follow-up group to arrange seminars to explore the following areas: cooperation concerning accreditation and quality assurance, recognition issues and the use of credits in the Bologna process, the development of joint degrees, the social dimension, with specific attention to obstacles to mobility, and the enlargement of the Bologna process, lifelong learning and student involvement

**Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training,
and the European Commission,
convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002,
on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training**

“The Copenhagen Declaration”

Over the years co-operation at European level within education and training has come to play a decisive role in creating the future European society.

Economic and social developments in Europe over the last decade have increasingly underlined the need for a European dimension to education and training. Furthermore, the transition towards a knowledge based economy capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion brings new challenges to the development of human resources.

The enlargement of the European Union adds a new dimension and a number of challenges, opportunities and requirements to the work in the field of education and training. It is particularly important that acceding member states should be integrated as partners in future cooperation on education and training initiatives at European level from the very beginning.

The successive development of the European education and training programmes has been a key factor for improving cooperation at European level.

The Bologna declaration on higher education in June 1999 marked the introduction of a new enhanced European cooperation in this area.

The Lisbon European Council in March 2000 recognised the important role of education as an integral part of economic and social policies, as an instrument for strengthening Europe's competitive power worldwide, and as a guarantee for ensuring the cohesion of our societies and the full development of its citizens. The European Council set the strategic objective for the European Union to become the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy. The development of high quality vocational education and training is a crucial and integral part of this strategy, notably in terms of promoting social inclusion, cohesion, mobility, employability and competitiveness.

The report on the 'Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems', endorsed by the Stockholm European Council in March 2001, identified new areas for joint actions at European level in order to achieve the goals set at the Lisbon European Council. These areas are based on the three strategic objectives of the report; i.e. improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union, facilitating access for all to education and training systems, and opening up education and training systems to the wider world.

In Barcelona, in March 2002 the European Council endorsed the Work Programme on the follow-up of the Objectives Report calling for European education and training to become a world quality reference by 2010. Furthermore, it called for further action to introduce instruments to ensure the transparency of diplomas and qualifications, including promoting action similar to the Bologna-process, but adapted to the field of vocational education and training.

In response to the Barcelona mandate, the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth and Culture) adopted on 12 November 2002 a Resolution on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training. This resolution invites the Member States, and the Commission, within the framework of their responsibilities, to involve the candidate countries and the EFTA-EEA countries, as well as the social partners, in promoting an increased cooperation in vocational education and training.

Strategies for lifelong learning and mobility are essential to promote employability, active citizenship, social inclusion and personal development¹. Developing a knowledge based Europe and ensuring that the European labour market is open to all is a major challenge to the vocational educational and training systems in Europe and to all actors involved. The same is true of the need for these systems to continuously adapt to new developments and changing demands of society. An enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training will be an important contribution towards ensuring a successful enlargement of the European Union and fulfilling the objectives identified by the European Council in Lisbon. Cedefop and the European Training Foundation are important bodies for supporting this cooperation.

The vital role of the social partners in the socio-economic development is reflected both in the context of the European social dialogue and the European Social Partners framework of actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications, agreed in March 2002. The social partners play an indispensable role in the development, validation and recognition of vocational competences and qualifications at all levels and are partners in the promotion of an enhanced cooperation in this area.

The following main priorities will be pursued through enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training:²

On the basis of these priorities we aim to increase voluntary cooperation in vocational education and training, in order to promote mutual trust, transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications, and thereby establishing a basis for increasing mobility and facilitating access to lifelong learning.

European dimension

- Strengthening the European dimension in vocational education and training with the aim of improving closer cooperation in order to facilitate and promote mobility and the development of inter-institutional cooperation, partnerships and other transnational initiatives, all in order to raise the profile of the European education and training area in an international context so that Europe will be recognised as a world-wide reference for learners.

Transparency, information and guidance

- Increasing transparency in vocational education and training through the implementation and rationalization of information tools and networks, including the integration of existing instruments such as the European CV, certificate and diploma supplements, the Common European framework of reference for languages and the EUROPASS into one single framework.
- Strengthening policies, systems and practices that support information, guidance and counselling in the Member States, at all levels of education, training and employment, particularly on issues concerning access to learning, vocational education and training, and the transferability and recognition of competences and qualifications, in order to support occupational and geographical mobility of citizens in Europe.

Recognition of competences and qualifications

- Investigating how transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels, could be promoted by developing reference levels, common principles for certification, and common measures, including a credit transfer system for vocational education and training
- Increasing support to the development of competences and qualifications at sectoral level, by reinforcing cooperation and co-ordination especially involving the social partners. Several initiatives on a Community, bilateral and multilateral basis, including those already identified in various sectors aiming at mutually recognised qualifications, illustrate this approach.

¹ Priorities identified in the Resolution on lifelong learning adopted by the Council of the European Union (Education and Youth) on 27 June 2002

² Priorities identified in the Resolution on the promotion of enhanced European co-operation on vocational education and training approved by the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth and Culture) on 12 November 2002

- Developing a set of common principles regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater compatibility between approaches in different countries and at different levels.

Quality assurance

- Promoting cooperation in quality assurance with particular focus on exchange of models and methods, as well as common criteria and principles for quality in vocational education and training.
- Giving attention to the learning needs of teachers and trainers within all forms of vocational education and training.

The following principles will underpin enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training:

- Cooperation should be based on the target of 2010, set by the European Council in accordance with the detailed work programme and the follow-up of the Objectives report in order to ensure coherence with the objectives set by the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth and Culture).
- Measures should be voluntary and principally developed through bottom-up cooperation.
- Initiatives must be focused on the needs of citizens and user organisations.
- Cooperation should be inclusive and involve Member States, the Commission, candidate countries, EFTA-EEA countries and the social partners.

The follow-up of this declaration should be pursued as follows to ensure an effective and successful implementation of an enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training:

1. Implementation of the enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training shall be a gradually integrated part of the follow-up of the objectives report. The Commission will reflect this integrated approach in its reporting to the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth and Culture) within the timetable already decided for the work of the objectives report. The ambition is to fully integrate the follow-up work of the enhanced co-operation in vocational education and training in the follow-up of the objectives report.
2. The existing Commission working group, which will be given a similar status to that of the working groups within the follow-up of the objectives report, in future including Member States, EFTA-EEA countries, candidate countries and the European social partners, will continue to work in order to ensure effective implementation and coordination of the enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training. The informal meetings of the Directors General for Vocational Training, which contributed to launching this initiative in Bruges 2001, will play an important role in focusing and animating the follow-up work.
3. Within this framework the initial focus between now and 2004 will be on concrete areas where work is already in progress, i.e. development of a single transparency framework, credit transfer in vocational education and training and development of quality tools. Other areas, which will be immediately included as a fully integrated part of the work of the follow-up of the objectives report organised in eight working groups and an indicator group, will be lifelong guidance, non-formal learning and training of teachers and trainers in vocational education and training. The Commission will include progress on these actions in its report mentioned in paragraph 1.

The ministers responsible for vocational education and training and the European Commission have confirmed the necessity to undertake the objectives and priorities for actions set out in this declaration and to participate in the framework for an enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training, including the social partners. A meeting in two years time will be held to review progress and give advice on priorities and strategies.



“Realising the European Higher Education Area”

Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers
responsible for Higher Education
in Berlin on 19 September 2003

Preamble

On 19 June 1999, one year after the Sorbonne Declaration, Ministers responsible for higher education from 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration. They agreed on important joint objectives for the development of a coherent and cohesive European Higher Education Area by 2010. In the first follow-up conference held in Prague on 19 May 2001, they increased the number of the objectives and reaffirmed their commitment to establish the European Higher Education Area by 2010. On 19 September 2003, Ministers responsible for higher education from 33 European countries met in Berlin in order to review the progress achieved and to set priorities and new objectives for the coming years, with a view to speeding up the realisation of the European Higher Education Area. They agreed on the following considerations, principles and priorities:

Ministers reaffirm the importance of the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The need to increase competitiveness must be balanced with the objective of improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area, aiming at strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities both at national and at European level. In that context, Ministers reaffirm their position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility. They emphasise that in international academic cooperation and exchanges, academic values should prevail.

Ministers take into due consideration the conclusions of the European Councils in Lisbon (2000) and Barcelona (2002) aimed at making Europe “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” and calling for further action and closer co-operation in the context of the Bologna Process.

Ministers take note of the Progress Report commissioned by the Follow-up Group on the development of the Bologna Process between Prague and Berlin. They also take note of the Trends-III Report prepared by the European University Association (EUA), as well as of the results of the seminars, which were organised as part of the work programme between Prague and Berlin by several member States and Higher Education Institutions, organisations and students. Ministers further note the National Reports, which are evidence of the considerable progress being made in the application of the principles of the Bologna Process. Finally, they take note of the messages from the European Commission and the Council of Europe and acknowledge their support for the implementation of the Process.

Ministers agree that efforts shall be undertaken in order to secure closer links overall between the higher education and research systems in their respective countries. The emerging European Higher Education Area will benefit from synergies with the European Research Area, thus strengthening the basis of the Europe of Knowledge. The aim is to preserve Europe’s cultural richness and linguistic diversity, based on its heritage of diversified traditions, and to foster its potential of innovation and social and economic development through enhanced co-operation among European Higher Education Institutions.

Ministers recognise the fundamental role in the development of the European Higher Education Area played by Higher Education Institutions and student organisations. They take note of the message from the European University Association (EUA) arising from the Graz Convention of Higher Education Institutions, the contributions from the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the communications from ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe.

Ministers welcome the interest shown by other regions of the world in the development of the European Higher Education Area, and welcome in particular the presence of representatives from European countries not yet party to the Bologna Process as well as from the Follow-up Committee of the European Union, Latin America and Caribbean (EULAC) Common Space for Higher Education as guests at this conference.

Progress

Ministers welcome the various initiatives undertaken since the Prague Higher Education Summit to move towards more comparability and compatibility, to make higher education systems more transparent and to enhance the quality of European higher education at institutional and national levels. They appreciate the co-operation and commitment of all partners - Higher Education Institutions, students and other stakeholders - to this effect.

Ministers emphasise the importance of all elements of the Bologna Process for establishing the European Higher Education Area and stress the need to intensify the efforts at institutional, national and European level. However, to give the Process further momentum, they commit themselves to intermediate priorities for the next two years. They will strengthen their efforts to promote effective quality assurance systems, to step up effective use of the system based on two cycles and to improve the recognition system of degrees and periods of studies.

Quality Assurance

The quality of higher education has proven to be at the heart of the setting up of a European Higher Education Area. Ministers commit themselves to supporting further development of quality assurance at institutional, national and European level. They stress the need to develop mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance.

They also stress that consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework.

Therefore, they agree that by 2005 national quality assurance systems should include:

- A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.
- Evaluation of programmes or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results.
- A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.
- International participation, co-operation and networking.

At the European level, Ministers call upon ENQA through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005. Due account will be taken of the expertise of other quality assurance associations and networks.

Degree structure: Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles

Ministers are pleased to note that, following their commitment in the Bologna Declaration to the two-cycle system, a comprehensive restructuring of the European landscape of higher education is now under way. All Ministers commit themselves to having started the implementation of the two cycle system by 2005.

Ministers underline the importance of consolidating the progress made, and of improving understanding and acceptance of the new qualifications through reinforcing dialogue within institutions and between institutions and employers.

Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.

Within such frameworks, degrees should have different defined outcomes. First and second cycle degrees should have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. First cycle degrees should give access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to second cycle programmes. Second cycle degrees should give access to doctoral studies.

Ministers invite the Follow-up Group to explore whether and how shorter higher education may be linked to the first cycle of a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area.

Ministers stress their commitment to making higher education equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means.

Promotion of mobility

Mobility of students and academic and administrative staff is the basis for establishing a European Higher Education Area. Ministers emphasise its importance for academic and cultural as well as political, social and economic spheres. They note with satisfaction that since their last meeting, mobility figures have increased, thanks also to the substantial support of the European Union programmes, and agree to undertake the necessary steps to improve the quality and coverage of statistical data on student mobility.

They reaffirm their intention to make every effort to remove all obstacles to mobility within the European Higher Education Area. With a view to promoting student mobility, Ministers will take the necessary steps to enable the portability of national loans and grants.

Establishment of a system of credits

Ministers stress the important role played by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in facilitating student mobility and international curriculum development. They note that ECTS is increasingly becoming a generalised basis for the national credit systems. They encourage further progress with the goal that the ECTS becomes not only a transfer but also an accumulation system, to be applied consistently as it develops within the emerging European Higher Education Area.

Recognition of degrees: Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

Ministers underline the importance of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which should be ratified by all countries participating in the Bologna Process, and call on the ENIC and NARIC networks along with the competent National Authorities to further the implementation of the Convention.

They set the objective that every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge. It should be issued in a widely spoken European language.

They appeal to institutions and employers to make full use of the Diploma Supplement, so as to take advantage of the improved transparency and flexibility of the higher education degree systems, for fostering employability and facilitating academic recognition for further studies.

Higher education institutions and students

Ministers welcome the commitment of Higher Education Institutions and students to the Bologna Process and recognise that it is ultimately the active participation of all partners in the Process that will ensure its long-term success.

Aware of the contribution strong institutions can make to economic and societal development, Ministers accept that institutions need to be empowered to take decisions on their internal organisation and administration. Ministers further call upon institutions to ensure that the reforms become fully integrated into core institutional functions and processes.

Ministers note the constructive participation of student organisations in the Bologna Process and underline the necessity to include the students continuously and at an early stage in further activities.

Students are full partners in higher education governance. Ministers note that national legal measures for ensuring student participation are largely in place throughout the European Higher Education Area. They also call on institutions and student organisations to identify ways of increasing actual student involvement in higher education governance.

Ministers stress the need for appropriate studying and living conditions for the students, so that they can successfully complete their studies within an appropriate period of time without obstacles related to their social and economic background. They also stress the need for more comparable data on the social and economic situation of students.

Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

Ministers note that, following their call in Prague, additional modules, courses and curricula with European content, orientation or organisation are being developed.

They note that initiatives have been taken by Higher Education Institutions in various European countries to pool their academic resources and cultural traditions in order to promote the development of integrated study programmes and joint degrees at first, second and third level.

Moreover, they stress the necessity of ensuring a substantial period of study abroad in joint degree programmes as well as proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning, so that students may achieve their full potential for European identity, citizenship and employability.

Ministers agree to engage at the national level to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of such degrees and to actively support the development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees.

Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

Ministers agree that the attractiveness and openness of the European higher education should be reinforced. They confirm their readiness to further develop scholarship programmes for students from third countries.

Ministers declare that transnational exchanges in higher education should be governed on the basis of academic quality and academic values, and agree to work in all appropriate fora to that end. In all appropriate circumstances such fora should include the social and economic partners.

They encourage the co-operation with regions in other parts of the world by opening Bologna seminars and conferences to representatives of these regions.

Lifelong learning

Ministers underline the important contribution of higher education in making lifelong learning a reality. They are taking steps to align their national policies to realise this goal and urge Higher Education Institutions and all concerned to enhance the possibilities for lifelong learning at higher education level including the recognition of prior learning. They emphasise that such action must be an integral part of higher education activity.

Ministers furthermore call those working on qualifications frameworks for the European Higher Education Area to encompass the wide range of flexible learning paths, opportunities and techniques and to make appropriate use of the ECTS credits.

They stress the need to improve opportunities for all citizens, in accordance with their aspirations and abilities, to follow the lifelong learning paths into and within higher education.

Additional Actions

European Higher Education Area and European Research Area – two pillars of the knowledge based society

Conscious of the need to promote closer links between the EHEA and the ERA in a Europe of Knowledge, and of the importance of research as an integral part of higher education across Europe, Ministers consider it necessary to go beyond the present focus on two main cycles of higher education to include the doctoral level as the third cycle in the Bologna Process. They emphasise the importance of research and research training and the promotion of interdisciplinarity in maintaining and improving the quality of higher education and in enhancing the competitiveness of European higher education more generally. Ministers call for increased mobility at the doctoral and postdoctoral levels and encourage the institutions concerned to increase their co-operation in doctoral studies and the training of young researchers.

Ministers will make the necessary effort to make European Higher Education Institutions an even more attractive and efficient partner. Therefore Ministers ask Higher Education Institutions to increase the role and relevance of research to technological, social and cultural evolution and to the needs of society.

Ministers understand that there are obstacles inhibiting the achievement of these goals and these cannot be resolved by Higher Education Institutions alone. It requires strong support, including financial, and appropriate decisions from national Governments and European Bodies.

Finally, Ministers state that networks at doctoral level should be given support to stimulate the development of excellence and to become one of the hallmarks of the European Higher Education Area.

Stocktaking

With a view to the goals set for 2010, it is expected that measures will be introduced to take stock of progress achieved in the Bologna Process. A mid-term stocktaking exercise would provide reliable information on how the Process is actually advancing and would offer the possibility to take corrective measures, if appropriate.

Ministers charge the Follow-up Group with organising a stocktaking process in time for their summit in 2005 and undertaking to prepare detailed reports on the progress and implementation of the intermediate priorities set for the next two years:

- quality assurance
- two-cycle system
- recognition of degrees and periods of studies

Participating countries will, furthermore, be prepared to allow access to the necessary information for research on higher education relating to the objectives of the Bologna Process. Access to data banks on ongoing research and research results shall be facilitated.

Further Follow-up

New members

Ministers consider it necessary to adapt the clause in the Prague Communiqué on applications for membership as follows:

Countries party to the European Cultural Convention shall be eligible for membership of the European Higher Education Area provided that they at the same time declare their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education. Their applications should contain information on how they will implement the principles and objectives of the declaration.

Ministers decide to accept the requests for membership of Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Holy See, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and to welcome these states as new members thus expanding the process to 40 European Countries.

Ministers recognise that membership of the Bologna Process implies substantial change and reform for all signatory countries. They agree to support the new signatory countries in those changes and reforms, incorporating them within the mutual discussions and assistance, which the Bologna Process involves.

Follow-up structure

Ministers entrust the implementation of all the issues covered in the Communiqué, the overall steering of the Bologna Process and the preparation of the next ministerial meeting to a Follow-up Group, which shall be composed of the representatives of all members of the Bologna Process and the European Commission, with the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE, ESIB and UNESCO/CEPES as consultative members. This group, which should be convened at least twice a year, shall be chaired by the EU Presidency, with the host country of the next Ministerial Conference as vice-chair.

A Board also chaired by the EU Presidency shall oversee the work between the meetings of the Follow-up Group. The Board will be composed of the chair, the next host country as vice-chair, the preceding and the following EU Presidencies, three participating countries elected by the Follow-up Group for one year, the European Commission and, as consultative members, the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB. The Follow-up Group as well as the Board may convene ad hoc working groups as they deem necessary.

The overall follow-up work will be supported by a Secretariat which the country hosting the next Ministerial Conference will provide.

In its first meeting after the Berlin Conference, the Follow-up Group is asked to further define the responsibilities of the Board and the tasks of the Secretariat.

Work programme 2003-2005

Ministers ask the Follow-up Group to co-ordinate activities for progress of the Bologna Process as indicated in the themes and actions covered by this Communiqué and report on them in time for the next ministerial meeting in 2005.

Next Conference

Ministers decide to hold the next conference in the city of Bergen (Norway) in May 2005.



The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals

Communiqué of the Conference of
European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education,
Bergen, 19-20 May 2005

We, Ministers responsible for higher education in the participating countries of the Bologna Process, have met for a mid-term review and for setting goals and priorities towards 2010. At this conference, we have welcomed Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as new participating countries in the Bologna Process. We all share the common understanding of the principles, objectives and commitments of the Process as expressed in the Bologna Declaration and in the subsequent communiqués from the Ministerial Conferences in Prague and Berlin. We confirm our commitment to coordinating our policies through the Bologna Process to establish the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010, and we commit ourselves to assisting the new participating countries to implement the goals of the Process.

I. Partnership

We underline the central role of higher education institutions, their staff and students as partners in the Bologna Process. Their role in the implementation of the Process becomes all the more important now that the necessary legislative reforms are largely in place, and we encourage them to continue and intensify their efforts to establish the EHEA. We welcome the clear commitment of higher education institutions across Europe to the Process, and we recognise that time is needed to optimise the impact of structural change on curricula and thus to ensure the introduction of the innovative teaching and learning processes that Europe needs.

We welcome the support of organisations representing business and the social partners and look forward to intensified cooperation in reaching the goals of the Bologna Process. We further welcome the contributions of the international institutions and organisations that are partners to the Process.

II. Taking stock

We take note of the significant progress made towards our goals, as set out in the General Report 2003-2005 from the Follow-up Group, in EUA's *Trends IV* report, and in ESIB's report *Bologna with Student Eyes*.

At our meeting in Berlin, we asked the Follow-up Group for a mid-term stocktaking, focusing on three priorities – the degree system, quality assurance and the recognition of degrees and periods of study. From the stocktaking report we note that substantial progress has been made in these three priority areas. It will be important to ensure that progress is consistent across all participating countries. We therefore see a need for greater sharing of expertise to build capacity at both institutional and governmental level.

The degree system

We note with satisfaction that the two-cycle degree system is being implemented on a large scale, with more than half of the students being enrolled in it in most countries. However, there are still some obstacles to access between cycles. Furthermore, there is a need for greater dialogue, involving Governments, institutions and social partners, to increase the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications, including in appropriate posts within the public service.

We adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. We commit ourselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010, and to having started work on this by 2007. We ask the Follow-up Group to report on the implementation and further development of the overarching framework.

We underline the importance of ensuring complementarity between the overarching framework for the EHEA and the proposed broader framework for qualifications for lifelong learning encompassing general education as well as vocational education and training as now being developed within the European Union as well as among participating countries. We ask the European Commission fully to consult all parties to the Bologna Process as work progresses.

Quality assurance

Almost all countries have made provision for a quality assurance system based on the criteria set out in the Berlin Communiqué and with a high degree of cooperation and networking. However, there is still progress to be made, in particular as regards student involvement and international cooperation. Furthermore, we urge higher education institutions to continue their efforts to enhance the quality of their activities through the systematic introduction of internal mechanisms and their direct correlation to external quality assurance.

We adopt the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area as proposed by ENQA. We commit ourselves to introducing the proposed model for peer review of quality assurance agencies on a national basis, while respecting the commonly accepted guidelines and criteria. We welcome the principle of a European register of quality assurance agencies based on national review. We ask that the practicalities of implementation be further developed by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB with a report back to us through the Follow-up Group. We underline the importance of cooperation between nationally recognised agencies with a view to enhancing the mutual recognition of accreditation or quality assurance decisions.

Recognition of degrees and study periods

We note that 36 of the 45 participating countries have now ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention. We urge those that have not already done so to ratify the Convention without delay. We commit ourselves to ensuring the full implementation of its principles, and to incorporating them in national legislation as appropriate. We call on all participating countries to address recognition problems identified by the ENIC/NARIC networks. We will draw up national action plans to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications. These plans will form part of each country's national report for the next Ministerial Conference. We express support for the subsidiary texts to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and call upon all national authorities and other stakeholders to recognise joint degrees awarded in two or more countries in the EHEA.

We see the development of national and European frameworks for qualifications as an opportunity to further embed lifelong learning in higher education. We will work with higher education institutions and others to improve recognition of prior learning including, where possible, non-formal and informal learning for access to, and as elements in, higher education programmes.

III. Further challenges and priorities

Higher education and research

We underline the importance of higher education in further enhancing research and the importance of research in underpinning higher education for the economic and cultural development of our societies and for social cohesion. We note that the efforts to introduce structural change and improve the quality of teaching should not detract from the effort to strengthen research and innovation. We therefore emphasise the importance of research and research training in maintaining and improving the quality of and enhancing the competitiveness and attractiveness of the EHEA. With a view to achieving better results we recognise the need to improve the synergy between the higher education sector and other research sectors throughout our respective countries and between the EHEA and the European Research Area.

To achieve these objectives, doctoral level qualifications need to be fully aligned with the EHEA overarching framework for qualifications using the outcomes-based approach. The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research. Considering the need for structured doctoral programmes and the need for transparent supervision and assessment, we note that the normal workload of the third cycle in most countries would correspond to 3-4 years full time. We urge universities to ensure that their doctoral programmes promote interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills, thus meeting the needs of the wider employment market. We need to achieve an overall increase in the numbers of doctoral candidates taking up research careers within the EHEA. We consider participants in third cycle programmes both as students and as early stage researchers. We charge the Bologna Follow-up Group with inviting the European University Association, together with other interested partners, to prepare a report under the responsibility of the Follow-up Group on the further development of the basic principles for doctoral programmes, to be presented to Ministers in 2007. Overregulation of doctoral programmes must be avoided.

The social dimension

The social dimension of the Bologna Process is a constituent part of the EHEA and a necessary condition for the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA. We therefore renew our commitment to making quality higher education equally accessible to all, and stress the need for appropriate conditions for students so that they can complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. The social dimension includes measures taken by governments to help students, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, in financial and economic aspects and to provide them with guidance and counselling services with a view to widening access.

Mobility

We recognise that mobility of students and staff among all participating countries remains one of the key objectives of the Bologna Process. Aware of the many remaining challenges to be overcome, we reconfirm our commitment to facilitate the portability of grants and loans where appropriate through joint action, with a view to making mobility within the EHEA a reality. We shall intensify our efforts to lift obstacles to mobility by facilitating the delivery of visa and work permits and by encouraging participation in mobility programmes. We urge institutions and students to make full use of mobility programmes, advocating full recognition of study periods abroad within such programmes.

The attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world

The European Higher Education Area must be open and should be attractive to other parts of the world. Our contribution to achieving education for all should be based on the principle of sustainable development and be in accordance with the ongoing international work on developing guidelines for quality provision of cross-border higher education. We reiterate that in international academic cooperation, academic values should prevail.

We see the European Higher Education Area as a partner of higher education systems in other regions of the world, stimulating balanced student and staff exchange and cooperation between higher education institutions. We underline the importance of intercultural understanding and respect. We look forward to enhancing the understanding of the Bologna Process in other continents by sharing our experiences of reform processes with neighbouring regions. We stress the need for dialogue on issues of mutual interest. We see the need to identify partner regions and intensify the exchange of ideas and experiences with those regions. We ask the Follow-up Group to elaborate and agree on a strategy for the external dimension.

IV. Taking stock on progress for 2007

We charge the Follow-up Group with continuing and widening the stocktaking process and reporting in time for the next Ministerial Conference. We expect stocktaking to be based on the appropriate methodology and to continue in the fields of the degree system, quality assurance and recognition of degrees and study periods, and by 2007 we will have largely completed the implementation of these three intermediate priorities.

In particular, we shall look for progress in:

- implementation of the standards and guidelines for quality assurance as proposed in the ENQA report;
- implementation of the national frameworks for qualifications;
- the awarding and recognition of joint degrees, including at the doctorate level;
- creating opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, including procedures for the recognition of prior learning.

We also charge the Follow-up Group with presenting comparable data on the mobility of staff and students as well as on the social and economic situation of students in participating countries as a basis for future stocktaking and reporting in time for the next Ministerial Conference. The future stocktaking will have to take into account the social dimension as defined above.

V. Preparing for 2010

Building on the achievements so far in the Bologna Process, we wish to establish a European Higher Education Area based on the principles of quality and transparency. We must cherish our rich heritage and cultural diversity in contributing to a knowledge-based society. We commit ourselves to upholding the principle of public responsibility for higher education in the context of complex modern societies. As higher education is situated at the crossroads of research, education and innovation, it is also the key to Europe's competitiveness. As we move closer to 2010, we undertake to ensure that higher education institutions enjoy the necessary autonomy to implement the agreed reforms, and we recognise the need for sustainable funding of institutions.

The European Higher Education Area is structured around three cycles, where each level has the function of preparing the student for the labour market, for further competence building and for active citizenship. The overarching framework for qualifications, the agreed set of European standards and guidelines for quality assurance and the recognition of degrees and periods of study are also key characteristics of the structure of the EHEA.

We endorse the follow-up structure set up in Berlin, with the inclusion of the Education International (EI) Pan-European Structure, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) as new consultative members of the Follow-up Group.

As the Bologna Process leads to the establishment of the EHEA, we have to consider the appropriate arrangements needed to support the continuing development beyond 2010, and we ask the Follow-up Group to explore these issues.

We will hold the next Ministerial Conference in London in 2007.

45 countries participate in the Bologna Process and are members of the Follow-up Group: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium (Flemish Community and French Community), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, the Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. In addition, the European Commission is a voting member of the Follow-up Group.

The Council of Europe, the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB), the Education International (EI) Pan-European Structure, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) are consultative members of the Follow-up Group.



18 May 2007

London Communiqué

Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world

1. Introduction

1.1 We, the Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process, have met in London to review progress made since we convened in Bergen in 2005.

1.2 Based on our agreed criteria for country membership, we welcome the Republic of Montenegro as a member of the Bologna Process.

1.3 Developments over the last two years have brought us a significant step closer to the realisation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Building on our rich and diverse European cultural heritage, we are developing an EHEA based on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunities and democratic principles that will facilitate mobility, increase employability and strengthen Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness. As we look ahead, we recognise that, in a changing world, there will be a continuing need to adapt our higher education systems, to ensure that the EHEA remains competitive and can respond effectively to the challenges of globalisation. In the short term, we appreciate that implementing the Bologna reforms is a significant task, and appreciate the continuing support and commitment of all partners in the process. We welcome the contribution of the working groups and seminars in helping to drive forward progress. We agree to continue to work together in partnership, assisting one another in our efforts and promoting the exchange of good practice.

1.4 We reaffirm our commitment to increasing the compatibility and comparability of our higher education systems, whilst at the same time respecting their diversity. We recognise the important influence higher education institutions (HEIs) exert on developing our societies, based on their traditions as centres of learning, research, creativity and knowledge transfer as well as their key role in defining and transmitting the values on which our societies are built. Our aim is to ensure that our HEIs have the necessary resources to continue to fulfil their full range of purposes. Those purposes include: preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development; creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base; and stimulating research and innovation.

1.5 We therefore underline the importance of strong institutions, which are diverse, adequately funded, autonomous and accountable. The principles of non-discrimination and equitable access should be respected and promoted throughout the EHEA. We commit to upholding these principles and to ensuring that neither students nor staff suffer discrimination of any kind.

2. Progress towards the EHEA

2.1 Our stocktaking report, along with EUA's *Trends V* report, ESIB's *Bologna With Student Eyes* and Eurydice's *Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe*, confirms that there has been good overall progress in the last two years. There is an increasing awareness that a significant outcome of the process will be a move towards student-centred higher education and away from teacher driven provision. We will continue to support this important development.

Mobility

2.2 Mobility of staff, students and graduates is one of the core elements of the Bologna Process, creating opportunities for personal growth, developing international cooperation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research, and giving substance to the European dimension.

2.3 Some progress has been made since 1999, but many challenges remain. Among the obstacles to mobility, issues relating to immigration, recognition, insufficient financial incentives and inflexible pension arrangements feature prominently. We recognise the responsibility of individual Governments to facilitate the delivery of visas, residence and work permits, as appropriate. Where these measures are outside our competence as Ministers for Higher Education, we undertake to work within our respective Governments for decisive progress in this area. At national level, we will work to implement fully the agreed recognition tools and procedures and consider ways of further incentivising mobility for both staff and students. This includes encouraging a significant increase in the number of joint programmes and the creation of flexible curricula, as well as urging our institutions to take greater responsibility for staff and student mobility, more equitably balanced between countries across the EHEA.

Degree structure

2.4 Good progress is being made at national and institutional levels towards our goal of an EHEA based on a three-cycle degree system. The number of students enrolled on courses in the first two-cycles has increased significantly and there has been a reduction in structural barriers between cycles. Similarly, there has been an increase in the number of structured doctoral programmes. We underline the importance of curricula reform leading to qualifications better suited both to the needs of the labour market and to further study. Efforts should concentrate in future on removing barriers to access and progression between cycles and on proper implementation of ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload. We underline the importance of improving graduate employability, whilst noting that data gathering on this issue needs to be developed further.

Recognition

2.5 Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components of the EHEA, both internally and in a global context. Easily readable and comparable degrees and accessible information on educational systems and qualifications frameworks are prerequisites for citizens' mobility and ensuring the continuing attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA. While we are pleased that 38 members of the Bologna Process, including Montenegro, have now ratified the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European region (Lisbon Recognition Convention), we urge the remaining members to do so as a matter of priority.

2.6 There has been progress in the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), ECTS and diploma supplements, but the range of national and institutional approaches to recognition needs to be more coherent. To improve recognition practices, we therefore ask the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) to arrange for the ENIC/NARIC networks to analyse our national action plans and spread good practice.

Qualifications Frameworks

2.7 Qualifications frameworks are important instruments in achieving comparability and transparency within the EHEA and facilitating the movement of learners within, as well as between, higher education systems. They should also help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning.

2.8 We note that some initial progress has been made towards the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort is required. We commit ourselves to fully implementing such national qualifications frameworks, certified against the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010. Recognising that this is a challenging task, we ask the Council of Europe to support the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. We emphasise that qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability.

2.9 We are satisfied that national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA will also be compatible with the proposal from the European Commission on a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

2.10 We see the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, which we agreed in Bergen, as a central element of the promotion of European higher education in a global context.

Lifelong Learning

2.11 The stocktaking report shows that some elements of flexible learning exist in most countries, but a more systematic development of flexible learning paths to support lifelong learning is at an early stage. We therefore ask BFUG to increase the sharing of good practice and to work towards a common understanding of the role of

higher education in lifelong learning. Only in a small number of EHEA countries could the recognition of prior learning for access and credits be said to be well developed. Working in cooperation with ENIC/NARIC, we invite BFUG to develop proposals for improving the recognition of prior learning.

Quality Assurance and a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies

2.12 The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA adopted in Bergen (ESG) have been a powerful driver of change in relation to quality assurance. All countries have started to implement them and some have made substantial progress. External quality assurance in particular is much better developed than before. The extent of student involvement at all levels has increased since 2005, although improvement is still necessary. Since the main responsibility for quality lies with HEIs, they should continue to develop their systems of quality assurance. We acknowledge the progress made with regard to mutual recognition of accreditation and quality assurance decisions, and encourage continued international cooperation amongst quality assurance agencies.

2.13 The first European Quality Assurance Forum, jointly organised by EUA, ENQA, EURASHE and ESIB (the E4 Group) in 2006 provided an opportunity to discuss European developments in quality assurance. We encourage the four organisations to continue to organise European Quality Assurance Fora on an annual basis, to facilitate the sharing of good practice and ensure that quality in the EHEA continues to improve.

2.14 We thank the E4 Group for responding to our request to further develop the practicalities of setting up a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies. The purpose of the register is to allow all stakeholders and the general public open access to objective information about trustworthy quality assurance agencies that are working in line with the ESG. It will therefore enhance confidence in higher education in the EHEA and beyond, and facilitate the mutual recognition of quality assurance and accreditation decisions. We welcome the establishment of a register by the E4 group, working in partnership, based on their proposed operational model. The register will be voluntary, self-financing, independent and transparent. Applications for inclusion on the register should be evaluated on the basis of substantial compliance with the ESG, evidenced through an independent review process endorsed by national authorities, where this endorsement is required by those authorities. We ask the E4 group to report progress to us regularly through BFUG, and to ensure that after two years of operation, the register is evaluated externally, taking account of the views of all stakeholders.

Doctoral candidates

2.15 Closer alignment of the EHEA with the European Research Area (ERA) remains an important objective. We recognise the value of developing and maintaining a wide variety of doctoral programmes linked to the overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA, whilst avoiding overregulation. At the same time, we appreciate that enhancing provision in the third cycle and improving the status, career prospects and funding for early stage researchers are essential preconditions for meeting Europe's objectives of strengthening research capacity and improving the quality and competitiveness of European higher education.

2.16 We therefore invite our HEIs to reinforce their efforts to embed doctoral programmes in institutional strategies and policies, and to develop appropriate career paths and opportunities for doctoral candidates and early stage researchers.

2.17 We invite EUA to continue to support the sharing of experience among HEIs on the range of innovative doctoral programmes that are emerging across Europe as well as on other crucial issues such as transparent access arrangements, supervision and assessment procedures, the development of transferable skills and ways of enhancing employability. We will look for appropriate opportunities to encourage greater exchange of information on funding and other issues between our Governments as well as with other research funding bodies.

Social dimension

2.18 Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society. Policy should therefore aim to maximise the potential of individuals in terms of their personal development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society. We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity.

The European Higher Education Area in a global context

2.19 We are pleased that in many parts of the world, the Bologna reforms have created considerable interest and stimulated discussion between European and international partners on a range of issues. These include the recognition of qualifications, the benefits of cooperation based upon partnership, mutual trust and understanding, and the underlying values of the Bologna Process. Moreover, we acknowledge that efforts have been made in some countries in other parts of the world to bring their higher education systems more closely into line with the Bologna framework.

2.20 We adopt the strategy "The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting" and will take forward work in the core policy areas: improving information on, and promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA; strengthening cooperation based on partnership; intensifying policy dialogue; and improving recognition. This work ought to be seen in relation to the OECD/UNESCO *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*.

3. Priorities for 2009

3.1 Over the next two years, we agree to concentrate on completing agreed Action Lines, including the ongoing priorities of the three-cycle degree system, quality assurance and recognition of degrees and study periods. We will focus in particular on the following areas for action.

Mobility

3.2 In our national reports for 2009, we will report on action taken at national level to promote the mobility of students and staff, including measures for future evaluation. We will focus on the main national challenges identified in paragraph 2.3 above. We also agree to set up a network of national experts to share information, and help to identify and overcome obstacles to the portability of grants and loans.

Social Dimension

3.3 Similarly, we will report on our national strategies and policies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures to evaluate their effectiveness. We will invite all stakeholders to participate in, and support this work, at the national level.

Data collection

3.4 We recognise the need to improve the availability of data on both mobility and the social dimension across all the countries participating in the Bologna Process. We therefore ask the European Commission (Eurostat), in conjunction with Eurostudent, to develop comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension and student and staff mobility in all Bologna countries. Data in this field should cover participative equity in higher education as well as employability for graduates. This task should be carried out in conjunction with BFUG and a report should be submitted to our 2009 Ministerial conference.

Employability

3.5 Following up on the introduction of the three-cycle degree system, we ask BFUG to consider in more detail how to improve employability in relation to each of these cycles as well as in the context of lifelong learning. This will involve the responsibilities of all stakeholders. Governments and HEIs will need to communicate more with employers and other stakeholders on the rationale for their reforms. We will work, as appropriate, within our governments to ensure that employment and career structures within the public service are fully compatible with the new degree system. We urge institutions to further develop partnerships and cooperation with employers in the ongoing process of curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes.

The European Higher Education Area in a global context

3.6 We ask BFUG to report back to us on overall developments in this area at the European, national and institutional levels by 2009. All stakeholders have a role here within their spheres of responsibility. In reporting on the implementation of the strategy for the EHEA in a global context, BFUG should in particular give consideration to two priorities. First, to improve the information available about the EHEA, by developing the Bologna Secretariat website and building on EUA's Bologna Handbook; and second, to improve recognition. We call on HEIs, ENIC/NARIC centres and other competent recognition authorities within the EHEA to assess qualifications from other parts of the world with the same open mind with which they would expect European qualifications to be assessed elsewhere, and to base this recognition on the principles of the LRC.

Stocktaking

3.7 We ask BFUG to continue the stocktaking process, based on national reports, in time for our 2009 Ministerial conference. We expect further development of the qualitative analysis in stocktaking, particularly in relation to mobility, the Bologna Process in a global context and the social dimension. The fields covered by stocktaking should continue to include the degree system and employability of graduates, recognition of degrees and study periods and implementation of all aspects of quality assurance in line with the ESG. With a view to the development of more student-centred, outcome-based learning, the next exercise should also address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.

4. Looking forward to 2010 and beyond

4.1 As the EHEA continues to develop and respond to the challenges of globalisation, we anticipate that the need for collaboration will continue beyond 2010.

4.2 We are determined to seize 2010, which will mark the passage from the Bologna Process to the EHEA, as an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to higher education as a key element in making our societies sustainable, at national as well as at European level. We will take 2010 as an opportunity to reformulate the vision that motivated us in setting the Bologna Process in motion in 1999 and to make the case for an EHEA underpinned by values and visions that go beyond issues of structures and tools. We undertake to make 2010 an opportunity to reset our higher education systems on a course that looks beyond the immediate issues and makes them fit to take up the challenges that will determine our future.

4.3 We ask BFUG as a whole to consider further how the EHEA might develop after 2010 and to report back to the next ministerial meeting in 2009. This should include proposals for appropriate support structures, bearing in mind that the current informal collaborative arrangements are working well and have brought about unprecedented change.

4.4 Building on previous stocktaking exercises, *Trends*, and *Bologna With Student Eyes*, we invite BFUG to consider for 2010 the preparation of a report including an independent assessment, in partnership with the consultative members, evaluating the overall progress of the Bologna Process across the EHEA since 1999.

4.5 We delegate the decision on the nature, content and place of any Ministerial meeting in 2010 to BFUG, to be taken within the first half of 2008.

4.6 Our next meeting will be hosted by the Benelux countries in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve on 28-29 April 2009.