

# **Towards a European Space for higher education:**

**the Bologna Declaration, June 1999**

**the Salamanca Convention of European Higher Education, March 2001**

**the Prague meeting of Ministers of Education, May 2001**

**the Berlin meeting of Ministers, September 2003**

## **This document includes:**

- The executive summary of the main background report to the Bologna meeting of Ministers of Education, "Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education in Europe", by Guy Haug and Jette Kirstein ("Trends1").
- The text and list of signatory countries of the Bologna Declaration signed by 29 Ministers of Education in June 1999.
- A view on the significance and future developments of the Bologna process: keynote address by Dr Guy Haug to the Annual Conference of the European Association for International Education (EAIE), Maastricht, December 1999.
- The conclusions of the seminar on the future format of Bachelor-type degrees in Europe, held in Helsinki in February 2001.
- The "Summary and Conclusions" of the survey of change/reforms since the Bologna Conference carried out by G. Haug and C. Tauch ("Trends 2") as an input to the Salamanca Convention of European institutions of higher education and the Prague meeting of Ministers in charge of higher education of March and May 2001.
- The "Salamanca message" produced by the European University Association (EUA) as an input to the Prague meeting of Ministers, April 2001.
- The "Prague Communiqué" of Ministers of Education, May 2001.
- The "Berlin Communiqué" of Ministers of Education, September 2003.

## **TRENDS AND ISSUES IN LEARNING STRUCTURES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This document is meant as a contribution to the follow up work to the Sorbonne Declaration of May 1998 which called for the harmonisation of the architecture of higher education qualification systems in Europe. Its main purposes are to map areas of convergence between these systems in Europe (mainly EU/EEA), to identify trends affecting them and to indicate ways towards greater convergence in the future.

The **survey of existing structures** shows the extreme complexity and diversity of curricular and degree structures in European countries. The Sorbonne Declaration recommended that studies should be organised in an undergraduate and a graduate cycle, but did not provide an indication of their duration. The debate that followed focussed on the alleged existence (or emergence) of a European “model” with 3 main levels of qualifications requiring 3, 5 or 8 years of study.

No significant convergence towards a 3-5-8 model was found. Whether traditional or newly introduced, bachelor-type degrees require 3 to 4 years, and many European countries without bachelors have first degrees in 4 years; there is however a high degree of convergence towards a duration of about 5 years for master-level studies; but there is no 8-year standard duration for doctoral degrees. In addition, whereas the UK, the US and most countries in the world - except in continental Europe - apply two-tier (undergraduate-postgraduate) systems, the length of studies and the degree structures vary considerably within and between these countries, and duration tends to be expressed in academic credits rather than in years.

Several important **trends affecting the structure of degrees/qualifications** in Europe could be identified. There is a strong and growing governmental push towards shorter studies, first aimed at reducing the real duration of studies to their official length (which is typically exceeded by 2 to 4 years in many countries), and more recently through the introduction of first degrees in countries with traditionally long curricula without an intermediate exit point. Recent reforms in Germany and Austria have introduced new bachelors/masters curricula on a voluntary basis alongside traditional diplomas, whereas in Italy and France existing curricula are being re-arranged in a first and postgraduate cycle. Elements of two-tier systems exist in many other European countries, and it seems that currently only a few countries in the EU/EEA do not have, or are not experimenting with two-tier curricula in at least part of their higher education system.

In countries with a binary system, the line of divide between the university and non-university sectors (and their degree structure) is become increasingly blurred. Most countries have adopted, or are adopting various types of systems for the transfer, and to a lesser extent also the accumulation of academic credits; most are compatible with the ECTS system, which is gaining ground at many institutions. There is a marked trend towards more autonomy of universities, coupled with new initiatives for quality control and evaluation in many countries.

In recent years, European higher education has been faced with mounting challenges from abroad. Transnational education delivered in English by foreign/overseas providers through branch campuses, franchising, or by electronic means has grown rapidly in many European countries; a whole new sector of higher education is emerging alongside traditional, national, state-regulated systems, but until now it has been largely ignored by governments as well as universities in Europe.

Four main avenues of combined **action which may foster the desired convergence and transparency in qualification structures in Europe** are being suggested.

\* The gradual adoption of an ECTS-compatible credit accumulation system. This would enhance the flexibility of national/institutional systems (in particular in view of the development of lifelong learning), bring them more in line with each other and with world systems, and ease mobility both within and from outside the EU/EEA area.

\* The adoption of a common, but flexible frame of reference for qualifications. A rigid, uniform model (like the 3-5-8 model) is neither desirable nor feasible in Europe. In line with the analysis of existing systems and reforms in progress, the following broad frame could serve as a common reference, while at the same time allowing for flexibility and differences in countries and subjects (length of studies are expressed not in years, but as the number of academic credits that must be successfully completed (one academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS credits):

- sub-degree level (certificate, diploma): 1 to 2 years worth of ECTS credits;
- first degree level (bachelor, honours, other first degree): no less than 3, no more than 4 years worth of ECTS credits;
- master level: about 5 years worth of ECTS credits, of which at least 12 months worth of master-level credits;
- doctoral level: variable (about 7 or 8 years in total).

The main conditions for meaningful first degrees of the bachelor/honours type are being set out. Key factors are the introduction of new curricula (instead of a sheer re-packaging of existing ones), a guaranteed level (gauged on the basis of knowledge and competencies acquired rather than time spent), real possibilities on the market labour, a clear separation from postgraduate studies, and formal accreditation. Short master programmes (12 months) present specific opportunities for intra-European mobility and international competitiveness.

\* An enhanced European dimension in quality assurance, evaluation and accreditation:

- compatible quality assurance systems, especially regarding the setting of threshold standards based on learning acquired (outputs) rather than on time spent and curriculum content (inputs);
- independent evaluation leading to European quality labels in broad subject areas; the current vacuum for independent evaluation in Europe would best be filled through agencies independent from national and European authorities, and working along subject lines; they could draw on existing and future European-wide subject-based networks;
- a coordinated approach to quality standards for transnational education, which raises the question of the recognition of foreign private providers.

\* Empowering Europeans to use the new learning opportunities. Compatible credit systems, understandable degree structures, increased quality assurance and an more European labour market are structural improvements which would create a whole new range of learning opportunities for all; their impact would be even greater if they were combined with measures such as short master degrees favouring new types of mobility, the further strengthening of the NARIC/ENIC network, counselling with a European dimension, and the elimination of remaining obstacles to student and teacher mobility.

The combined impact of the suggested action lines would also make European higher education more understandable and attractive to students, scholars and employers from other continents; they would enhance European competitiveness and thus help to consolidate (or in the eyes of many, to re-establish) its role and influence in the world.

Dr Guy HAUG

## **BOLOGNA DECLARATION**

### **Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education convened in Bologna on the 19th of June 1999**

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 competencies 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 the 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 competencies 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 to again 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.

***Signed by: Austria, Belgium (French community), Belgium (Flemish community), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Swiss Confederation, United Kingdom.***

**VISIONS OF A EUROPEAN FUTURE :**  
**BOLOGNA AND BEYOND**

**Keynote address by Dr Guy HAUG,  
Delegate-at-large, Association of European Universities (CRE), Geneva  
11<sup>th</sup> EAIE Conference, Maastricht, 2 December 1999**

Dear colleagues,

I have about a half hour to try and convince you that the Bologna Declaration is not just one of those rather vague statements which sometimes emerge from ministerial meetings, but a key document which signals a turning point in the development of European higher education and will affect in one way or another everyone present in this room today.

I was involved in the Bologna process for the preparation of the background report for the Bologna meeting of educational leaders and ministers, which Jette Kirstein and myself produced for the Confederation of EU rectors' Conference and the CRE with support from the European Commission.

I will first stress the significance of Bologna, before sketching some broader observations for the future.

**The significance of the Bologna Declaration**

The Bologna Declaration came in the wake of the Sorbonne Declaration which was issued one year earlier and with which it shares several important common features. First, the two documents have the same ultimate goal (the gradual setting up of a European space for higher education); a second common feature is their approach, based on a joint effort between ministers and higher education representatives; third, both documents focus on structure rather than on content, and deal with "qualifications" rather than with academic degrees; and fourth, they both, maybe for the first time, pay attention to the international competitiveness of European higher education. The Sorbonne Declaration was followed by a debate on compatibility and harmonisation in higher education, but in a climate of confusion (mainly related to the alleged existence, or emergence, of a pattern of degrees after 3, 5, and 8 years in higher education, which it did not formally recommend but was associated with it in the mind of a majority of commentators) and concern (mainly about the perceived attempt to impose a single model that would threaten diversity).

Against this background, the preparation of the Bologna conference required a survey aimed at mapping the areas of convergence and divergence in the current situation and current trends in higher education. Here is what we found:

- extreme diversity, to such a degree that it may well be called confusion, or even chaos; I acquired the conviction that the dense jungle of degrees, institutions and systems is the single biggest obstacle to more mobility in higher education in Europe;
- no convergence towards a strict 3-5-8 pattern of degrees: many countries have sub-degree programmes in 1 or 2 years, first degrees (whether traditional or newly introduced) take between 3 and 4 years, there is no 8 year standard duration for a doctorate, but there is a high degree of convergence around a total duration of about 5 years for master level studies; it was also clear that there was no ready-to-use external model (e.g. in the USA) that would be replicable, but that Europe needs to develop its own model to suit its unique cultural and educational needs;

- a convergent set of reforms recently introduced or in progress in several European countries: they signal a move towards shorter studies (reduction of actual length of studies to their theoretical duration, introduction of first degrees in systems where they were unknown), 2-tier degree structures (introduction of bachelor-type and master degrees instead of long, tunnel-type curricula which offer no successful exit point before 5, 6 or even 7 years of study), more credit systems, external evaluation, more autonomy coupled with more accountability. Another trend is towards the blurring of boundaries between the university and non-university sector (near-university status for some institutions, more bridges between the two sectors).

The report also found that both ministerial spheres and higher education institutions were largely aware of internal issues (those related to the need for more compatibility, access to the labour market, remaining structural obstacles to mobility), but were much less aware of external issues and challenges, in spite of the growth of transnational education and the signals pointing to decreasing attractiveness of European higher education in the rest of the world.

We also found in many countries a widespread willingness to reform and converge, combined with a lack of information about the intentions of other countries and the direction in which reforms should be planned in order to achieve greater compatibility and ease mobility.

The Bologna Declaration reflects most of the observations just made. But what is this really ? It is not only a vague political statement signed by 29 countries in Europe. It is more than just this; it actually sets out an action plan: there is a goal (to achieve a European space for higher education), there is a calendar (completion of the European space within the first decade of the new millenium, next meeting of ministers and higher education leaders to be held in Prague in 2001) and there is a programme of activities. What should be achieved ? Readable and comparable degrees, undergraduate and postgraduate levels in all countries, with a first degree no shorter than 3 years and clearly relevant to the labour market, ECTS-compatible credit systems everywhere, a European dimension in quality assurance and an improvement of the free movement of students and teachers through structural reforms (basically, by taking away the remaining obstacles). This is the main thrust of the Bologna Declaration: a pledge freely taken by 29 countries to reform their own system in such a way that all systems converge.

I would like to add a few other comments about the Declaration. First, it should be pointed out that there was another document issued at the same time by student representatives present at the Bologna meeting. Students were not much involved in the preparatory work to the meeting, but during the meeting they produced a “Bologna Declaration of the students”. It endorses some of the goals of the ministerial declaration, but expresses disagreement on some important items; in particular, students were not under the impression that European higher education was being so much challenged from outside; in their view, the first priority should rather be to fund more generously higher education in general, and mobility grants in particular.

Another important aspect of the official Bologna Declaration is that it includes an invitation to institutions of higher education to contribute to the success of the process of reform and convergence. This is something absolutely crucial for us all in higher education: the invitation is for us to get our own act together and to tell ministers in a convincing way what kind of European space for higher education we want. This is a unique opportunity as well as a real responsibility for the higher education community.

### **What can be expected in the coming months and years ?**

First, one should expect a series of national reforms, possibly taking inspiration from those countries which recently reformed their systems in line with the Sorbonne and Bologna. Such national reforms can

result from legislative or governmental action or from inter-institutional agreements at the national level. They are likely to go for a two-tier degree structure (bachelors- masters) mainly through the introduction of shorter first degrees, most likely combined with independent accreditation ; they are also likely to create more bridges between the university and non-university subsystems and to lift - or at least to diminish- the restrictions imposed by national regulations on their own university-level, non-university sector.

Second, there is a work programme at the European level which is being prepared and this is already the run up towards Prague. This work programme is in essence intergovernmental, and I would hope that those European countries that were not invited to Bologna and hence have not signed the Bologna Declaration will be involved this time, and that a special effort will be made for the inclusion of countries in Southeast Europe. Although the process is going to be mainly intergovernmental, there is also going to be an input from the European Union: it is reassuring that the follow up to Bologna was an important item of the agenda of recent EU ministerial meetings and that it is a priority of the current Finnish presidency as well as of the upcoming Portuguese presidency which will start in a few weeks.

It is also important that this follow up work will be based on a dialogue between all signatory countries. Each will appoint a contact person specifically for questions relating to the Bologna process, and all these contact persons will jointly prepare the next stages. I hope also that students will now be involved more than they were in the preparation for Bologna. The dialogue should naturally also involve representative organisations of higher education institutions: the Association of European Universities (CRE), the Confederation of EU Rector's Conferences and others (I am thinking of Eurashe and of course of the EAIE).

What kind of action can be expected from this dialogue between ministries and higher education at the European level ? Progress is needed in the working out of the common framework of reference for qualifications; we are not talking about the creation of a new category of "European" degrees/qualifications, but of the setting up of a common reference for existing degrees/qualifications. Action can also be expected on academic credits and quality standards, and I hope that due attention will also be paid to international aspects, in particular to issues relating to transnational education.

What can universities and other types of higher education do ? The most important move they can take (and my view ought to take) is certainly to shape and structure their own offering in the light of the new post-Bologna environment; there are two particularly important changes which institutions could implement to profile themselves for the emerging European space for higher education :

- the introduction of meaningful first (undergraduate) degrees in systems where they do not traditionally exist; these courses need to be shorter, more flexible (in particular through the adoption of credit systems), more relevant to professional life, more multidisciplinary, more European and international; they should open access both to postgraduate studies and to the labour market;
- but maybe the newest aspect (and the one that would boost across-the-board reforms) in many countries would be the creation of new master's courses in environments where there were no short, or separate, programme at this level; if they are to meet the needs and expectations of mobile students from around the world, they should be relatively short (about 12 to 18 or no more than 24 months), and they should be clearly open to the participation of students who completed their undergraduate studies at a different institution or in a different country in Europe or elsewhere in the world. This is of course of absolutely crucial importance if reforms are to be successful: the aim is not simply to cut long curricula in two stages and to have the same students continue their studies in the same discipline, at the same institution in the same country, immediately after completing a bachelor's degree. There are real advantages for new master degrees to be offered by consortia of institutions rather than by just one university; the main benefit one could expect from the development of independent master's degrees would be to have a much wider redistribution of students entering the

postgraduate level than we currently have. This could also pave the way to a new type of mobility: by and large, the current EU programmes have focussed on “horizontal” mobility (where students do abroad something which is accepted as a replacement of what they would have studied at their home institution); a new environment with a choice of diversified, relatively short, specialised master programmes would encourage a form of “vertical” mobility, if a significant proportion of those holding a bachelor degree change universities (and possibly subject and/or country) for their postgraduate studies – not necessarily immediately after finishing their undergraduate studies. The extent to which this happens will probably be a very good indicator of how successful the whole reform process is going to be.

I will now give some indications of my main areas of concern for the post-Bologna developments. They are five.

First, there is the risk of non-concerted reforms. This could happen if some countries were to introduce superficial, window-dressing reforms, e.g. taking a long curriculum and just cutting it in bits and pieces, renaming these “credits” and awarding a bachelor after say the 7th semester of a traditional 5 to 6-year study programme; this would obviously not satisfy the criteria for meaningful first degrees which I outlined. There is also a chance that we see contradictory moves, in particular in certain countries where the definition of new first degrees or of master degrees could create a new type of difficulties if it does not fit in the common frame of reference.

A second risk, and a very serious one in case it became true, would be for countries to focus on very small differences (for example tracking the minor differences in content and organisation between a German and a Spanish degree in chemistry) rather than looking at the big common issues: while we may be struggling about minor details, this may divert our attention from the real challenge which is coming from outside.

The third risk I see is precisely that the challenge from abroad (transnational education, distance education, campuses abroad under the control of another European university or an overseas institution) remains under-estimated, and that neither governments nor higher education institutions are ready to see it and address it as a common issue.

The fourth risk would be that not all countries in Europe be included in the process of setting up the European space for higher education. I hope and believe that this can be avoided.

Fifth, maybe the most important risk which we are currently facing is that higher education institutions themselves under-estimate the level of change that has been announced and wake up a little bit too late. It is clearly an important responsibility of the EAIE to help disseminate the message to all those dealing with international aspects at higher education institutions in Europe; and it also the responsibility of those present today to inform others at their own university about the programme of change agreed upon in Bologna.

Turning now to important aspects not directly linked to Bologna, but with a foreseeable impact on the higher education scenery in Europe in the years ahead, my opinion is that we are about to enter a new era in the process of internationalisation in higher education. From this viewpoint I would first like to stress that the Bologna process is not an isolated phenomenon, and then I would like to point out some key differences between what has marked the decade of the nineties and what is likely to mark the next decade – in particular some upcoming challenges in the international arena.

As I said, the changes announced in Bologna are not an isolated process. They coincide with other major changes in the global environment in which we all operate. Let me just mention 4 such changes:

- the emergence of a real European labour market, which is bound to shape a good deal of the university offering and functioning in the years ahead: it is unlikely that the combination between a high rate of unemployment of graduates and a shortage of highly educated young people in key areas will be accepted much longer by society;
- the end of the strong numerical expansion at universities, which has already started in some countries and will soon start in several others; the kind of “natural” growth which universities enjoyed in the last decades is nearing its end and this entails a number of consequences; many universities will have to do something which they were not at all accustomed to do, i.e. compete for students, especially since public funding in most countries is in one way or another dependent on student enrolment. This is something really new in many higher education communities; it can be expected that students’ choice will increase and that institutions will have to pay more attention to their needs and satisfaction than in the past;
- Third, there is a considerable growth of new providers, many of them from abroad; this will add to the choice available to students and for the first time ever we may be in a position to see what they choose if they have a real possibility to choose from a spectrum of different types of education from inland and abroad. This raises fundamental questions which are however easy to ignore when other factors nourish the growth of annual intakes into higher education in a particular country: why would students choose a foreign provider, who may be rather expensive, rather than staying within their own national and often traditional system which comes for free? As long as there was no choice, there was no question and hence no need to provide an answer; in future, universities will need to come up with answers.
- The fourth major change I see is that the accountability of universities for the use of public funds is likely to increase significantly in future; it seems to me particularly unlikely that public funding will be available to support institutions and students for studies much beyond the normal duration of studies; a distinct move in this direction has already started.

For these and other reasons, we are entering a new age in international education. The main thrust of the past decade has been on cooperation and exchanges within existing structures; in order to make this possible, efforts were started to create “transparency” between national systems which differ from each other in many respects and are sometimes quite difficult to reconcile; other distinctive features of the past decade are that programmes are mainly geared towards the europeanisation of institutions, they have been to a considerable extent EU-driven and have focussed on organised, “horizontal” mobility; their purpose has been to deal with diversity and its consequences and complexities, but without pushing for structural changes in the national systems.

The next decade is likely to continue some – maybe most- activities that have been developed during the past years. There is even a need to provide for further growth and improved quality of certain types of mobility. But the tools put to use until now are reaching their limits: we still need them to do what they can achieve, but we need something more and something different.

The key features of the next decade are indeed likely to be different from those of the past. There are reasons to believe that we have entered a phase in which structural change will become the core development – including the boosting of mobility, through structural measures such as the elimination of regulatory or administrative obstacles, easier access to more complete information, and the provision of freer choice. While higher education has been increasingly internationalising over the last 10 to 15 years, it may just now be entering a cycle marked by a certain degree of “de-nationalisation”. Probably we will more and more try to organise diversity, in order to limit the confusion or even chaos than can result from the total absence of convergent action in a region made up of so many different countries. I also believe that we are entering a phase where intergovernmental action, encompassing the whole of Europe (not only the EU), will play a growing role – hopefully in close interplay with universities. We are likely to see new forms of mobility, in particular more “vertical” mobility and more ‘free movers’ (especially at the

postgraduate level) in a more readable environment with fewer structural obstacles to the individual initiative of students as well as teachers.

Last but not least, I expect more attention to be given to the position of Europe with respect to the rest of the world. For example, most of the consortia and networks which we have in Europe have mainly functioned as structures for internal cooperation and exchanges, i.e. for the various types of activities between the members of the consortium or network. There is likely to be a whole new range of possibilities for these consortia/networks focussing on the development of joint activities abroad (outside of Europe). One of the most important changes I would expect in the years ahead is that Europe (in particular, but not exclusively, the European Union) will pay more attention to the external aspects of its policies, including those in the area of higher education. This should lead to a change of focus from intra-European –or intra-EU activities - to European programmes for joint activities elsewhere in the world. I would like to mention three developments related to this.

- First, it seems to me essential that we should close the competitive gap at home; this would mean in particular that higher education institutions in Europe should endeavour to put together and publicise the kind of educational opportunities students from the rest of the world would like to find on offer in Europe; closing the competitive gap at home would also require that the limitations imposed on some of our best non-university institutions, which severely penalise them in the international arena, should be lifted.
- Secondly, it has become vitally important that we regulate transnational education; there is currently a legal vacuum in this area, with most countries ignoring this new type of education in their legal system; the aim of legislative action in this area should not be to try and prohibit transnational education – attempts to do so would most likely be doomed anyway; but it has become essential to differentiate between “legitimate” educational activities and those which do not offer sufficient guarantee and are not worth the time and money of our students. Quality transnational education broadens the choice of students and may represent a valuable alternative to traditional education. It is amazing that the possible inclusion of “educational services” into the upcoming round of negotiations within the World Trade Organisation does not receive more attention in Europe, neither from governments, the press or higher education itself : the vast majority of rectors and international relations managers seem to be totally unaware of, or uninterested in these developments, however important they may be for the future of higher education as a key area in the worldwide competition.
- Thirdly, European higher education needs to learn to compete better in the world markets for higher education; there also, I do not think that the real problem is that there are so many US campuses in Europe or in Asia, but rather that there are so few European campuses in the US, Latin America or other regions in the world. This is an area of paramount importance, and it seems to me essential that European universities should mobilise their energies and resources to compete in the world market: through the setting up of the type of courses which may suit the needs of overseas students, through increased information and marketing efforts to attract students (including paying students, not only exchange students) from other continents. In order to be able to fully enter this competition, European universities need to become much more present on site and to get organised. Contrary to what I keep hearing from many in continental Europe, universities from the UK, the US or Australia do not attract foreign students just because they teach in English: they have also invested for years, and sometimes decades, to offer the right type of courses, user-friendly student services (e.g. accommodation) and understandable degrees, and to publicise and explain their offering through permanent representations and recruitment efforts on site. The majority of universities in Europe still lack the mindset and the experience required in the growing competition for students and the related revenues. This is most conspicuous in certain key areas, such as registration procedures, non-educational student services (e.g. accommodation) and of course, sadly enough, visa policies; the visa policies applied by several

European countries have had a disastrous impact on their image as potential destinations for academic purposes among students and faculty from most of the rest of the world.

There are many strengths in European higher education. First and foremost, I think that quality is still very high when compared internationally. Diversity, if properly used, can also be a strength. The process of European integration itself could be used as a “selling point”. Tuition fees are comparatively low, and the overall cost advantage which Europe may offer to students from the world, which is currently often interpreted as a signal of lower quality, could be turned into a strong competitive advantage if properly explained.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues: I believe we are currently at a moment in time when we need to act, mainly because the cost of the *status quo* would be extremely high. It would create internally in Europe a new split between certain universities, not all located in the same country, which have fully integrated the world dimension of higher education, and other educational institutions which have not. The need to act is also commensurate with the external challenge facing European higher education – even though this challenge has not yet been fully acknowledged. In addition, we need to meet the high expectations of our students and the broader society: from all the areas where European citizens expect action and results from European integration, education comes regularly as number one in opinion polls. Let's not frustrate these hopes.

Not only is there a need to act: now is also the right time to act. We will move from the cooperation/mobility phase to the phase of structural change, and it is high time that we fully recognise the nature and the size of the challenge with which a rapidly expanding transnational education is facing us.

It is therefore from this viewpoint particularly important to see that there is a willingness to act: in Bologna, governments as well as the higher education community have signalled their intention to act and there is a work programme for the coming years.

Last but not least, there are means to act. We are not starting from zero: there is a broad range of tools which can be put at use. I am thinking of ECTS, the NARIC network, the Diploma Supplement, the European Quality Network, and of all these consortia and networks which have developed and accumulated experience in the past years.

Universities and other institutions of higher education need to take on the challenge to build up a compatible, effective system within Europe, and a competitive one towards the rest of the world. The challenge is not only to adapt to the new environment shaped by world trends and the Bologna process. The real challenge is that in Bologna, as already before at the Sorbonne, the higher education community has been invited to make an input. In order to be in a position to provide this input, we in higher education need to figure out clearly what we want ministers, governments, the European Union and other international actors to do.

Thank you very much for attention.

**The Bologna Process**  
**Seminar on Bachelor-level degrees**  
Helsinki, Finland, 16-17 February 2001

**Conclusions and Recommendations to the Prague Higher Education Summit**

**Benefits of developing Bachelor-level degrees**

Most European countries have introduced, are introducing or are planning to introduce a higher education degree structure based on a sequence of Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degrees. Reforms in this direction have been carried out in higher education systems based exclusively on universities (i.e. "unitary systems") as well as in "binary" or "dual" systems.

The Bachelor/Master ("two-tier") articulation offers several advantages in comparison with the long, inflexible curricula leading straight up to the Master level which have been traditional in many countries. A main benefit is that students can be offered programmes which allow more individual flexibility. The two-tier structure makes room for national and international mobility by contributing to the modularisation of study programmes. In the age of lifelong learning one of the most significant factors speaking in favour of a two-tier structure is that it allows interaction between studies and working life. Introducing first degrees of the Bachelor type also contributes to developing multidisciplinary Master programmes accessible by students from other home and international institutions.

High drop-out rates and the lengthening of university studies are problems shared by many European countries. Well planned and designed Bachelor degree programmes help reduce the number of students discontinuing their studies without any qualification and thus facilitates their entrance on the European labour market while contributing to shortening overall study times.

The Bachelor/Master structure has become a world standard. Its adoption will facilitate the better recognition of European degrees both within Europe and in the world and will make it more attractive for international students to consider studying in Europe.

**Framework for Bachelor-level degrees in Europe**

The promotion of mobility in Europe requires increased transparency and comparability of European higher education qualifications. In order to achieve this some common criteria for the definition of Bachelor degrees are needed. This framework should be flexible enough to allow national variations, but at the same time clear enough to serve as a definition/standard.

The following factors would be constitute useful common denominators for European Bachelor-level degrees :

The Bachelor-level degree is a higher education qualification requiring from 180 to 240 credits (ECTS). It normally takes three to four years of full-time study to complete the degree.

It is important to note that Bachelor-level degrees, often referred to as "first degrees", can be taken either at traditional universities or at professionally-oriented higher education institutions. Programmes leading to the degree may, and indeed should have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs.

In order to increase transparency it is important that the specific orientation and profile of a given qualification is included in its title and explained in the Diploma Supplement issued to students. Some alignment of terminology would be highly desirable in order to foster transparency.

Even Bachelor degrees which serve mainly as an intermediate qualification preparing students for further study should be based on their proper curriculum. They should not only be seen as a part of a longer curriculum, as some students may wish to change direction or to choose a postgraduate programme or specialisation offered at another institution.

### **Labour market relevance**

There are many different ways in which Bachelor-type degrees can be relevant to the now common European labour market. While many curricula ought to be geared towards specific professions and immediate entrance onto the labour market, others need to prepare students for further studies and a later entrance. All curricula should include transversal skills/competencies required from all active citizens in Europe.

In European countries labour markets expect higher education qualifications from more and more young people. This is unlikely to be possible in countries offering only long one-tier qualifications. The higher education system is expected to offer independent, shorter degrees of the Bachelor type geared towards specific labour market needs. At the same time there are enormous needs for updating and upgrading qualifications and skills of the present labour force. In order to ensure labour market relevance of the first degrees for young and adult learners it is important that the curricula are developed in close collaboration between higher education institutions and social partners and other representatives of working life.

### **Disciplinary issues**

Different disciplines have strong traditions of their own and they have to be taken into consideration when developing the degree structures of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It should be clear that in some fields at universities, most notably in medicine and technology, Bachelor-level degrees cannot serve as an independent qualification leading to full professional competence. However in those fields too an intermediate qualification may be worth developing for the reasons mentioned above.

In all fields, reasonable transition/bridging mechanisms between Bachelor and Master programmes should be established, both within the same higher education sector and between different higher education sectors. The emerging European higher education landscape is likely to feature a broad variety of profiles in Bachelor-type degrees opening access to the labour market and/or to a broad variety of profiles in Master-level studies, either immediately or at a later stage.

Transparency and comparability cannot be increased by merely reforming structures. Broad definitions of core competencies expected from graduates of Bachelor and Master programmes in broad subject areas are needed at the European level. These definitions should concern only competencies transferable from one field to another.

**Towards the European higher education area :  
survey of main reforms from Bologna to Prague**  
(**"Trends II"**), April 2001

Summary and conclusions  
Guy HAUG and Christian TAUCH

Review of structures and trends in the countries not covered in 1999 in the Trends 1 report

Trends 1 was mainly based on a survey of structure and trends in higher education in the EU/EEA countries. Trends 2 surveyed the other signatory countries of the Bologna Declaration. This review:

- confirms all the main conclusions reached in the Trends 1 report;
- reinforces the observation concerning the move towards a two-tier system, but not necessarily corresponding to the definitions used for the degree structure outlined in the Bologna Declaration (e.g. the notions of "postgraduate" or "binary" system of higher education);
- confirms the observation concerning the move towards accreditation;
- shows that long study programmes at all levels, and rather inflexible mono-disciplinary curricula still exist in several countries and would need to be adjusted to meet the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

The follow-up process to the Bologna Declaration: widespread interest and support

- The Bologna Declaration is on all agendas: all countries have established a unit or a forum to explain and discuss its content and implications. It serves as a new source of dialogue between Ministries and higher education institutions, and between sub-sectors of higher education;
- It is mostly seen as confirming/reinforcing national priorities: this is the process' biggest strength, i.e. it "crystallises" major trends and reveals that issues and solutions have a European dimension; as a consequence the process is not (or no longer) seen as an intrusion, but as a source of information on the most suitable way forward for Europe;
- It has been used to accelerate, facilitate and guide change: the main role of the Declaration has become to serve as a long term agenda for structural change;
- A major strength of the process is its complementarity with other developments in progress. It reinforces and it is being reinforced by other tools/factors which point in the same direction: Lisbon Convention, Diploma Supplement, ENQA, EU Directives, EU mobility programmes including ECTS, ENIC/NARIC network, reforms entailed by the accession process to the EU in the countries concerned;
- The Bologna process is both a consequence of, and a contribution to the process of integration of European higher education.

Consensus on the core objectives of the process

- Mobility: there is unanimous support to the promotion of the mobility of students as well as of graduates, both outbound and (less expectedly) inbound. Teacher mobility seems to still receive insufficient attention. The mobility agenda of the Declaration is strongly underpinned by EU tools (ECTS, SOCRATES, TEMPUS, directives on professional recognition, Mobility Action Plan) and by the Lisbon Convention as well as by the willingness to prepare for EU integration in the countries concerned. ECTS and the Diploma Supplement receive very strong support.
- Employability: the Bologna Declaration has reinforced the debate and increased the awareness that employability is an issue all over Europe. There are new "professional Bachelors" in several countries, and new "professional Masters" in some. The change to a two-tier structure does not necessarily come with immediate in-depth renovation of the underlying curricula. The debate has now taken into account that there are various ways in which first degrees can be "relevant to the European labour market" and that all need not to be directly geared towards short term employment in a particular profession. In some countries university Bachelors are mainly seen as a preparation and a platform for the choice of postgraduate studies; this is less a problem where a strong college sector produces a significant number of holders of professionally oriented Bachelors.
- Competitiveness/attractiveness: most countries now seem to understand "competitiveness" in a positive sense and to endorse the need for their higher education systems to be "attractive". The issue is seen as "important" or "crucial" in an unexpectedly high number of countries: several have specific comprehensive plans aimed at non-European students; accession countries want to enhance their attractiveness to EU students in order to balance their exchanges within SOCRATES. No country said competitiveness was irrelevant, but it is not yet on the agenda everywhere. Most countries show little concern about transnational education and foreign accreditation sought by their universities. Answers to transnational education are mainly of two types: to rule it out, or to subject it to national rules; neither is likely to resolve the issue. The Bologna Declaration is attracting interest outside Europe, in particular in Latin America: this confirms that understandable higher education structures would make Europe a more attractive study destination in other world regions.

### Instruments of the convergence process

- Easily readable and comparable degrees: three countries developed comprehensive and coherent qualifications frameworks which could be useful for similar exercises in others and therefore relevant for Europe as a whole. Regional higher education areas are being consolidated in the Baltic Republics and the Nordic countries. Far from imposing uniformity as was sometimes feared, Bologna has encouraged more diversity and more flexibility. In particular, there are now more binary systems, with more bridges between sub-systems and more "professional Bachelors/Masters": The surprising fears that the Bologna Declaration had the intention to transform all colleges into universities seems to be disappearing. On the contrary, the move towards integrated systems (one system with different institutions and various bridges between them) is confirmed in a number of countries. The Diploma Supplement is seen as a major instrument to facilitate readability and comparability. There are still very complex degree structures in many countries, e.g. systems which are in fact not binary but "trinary" (universities, colleges/polytechnics, short post-secondary courses) with different degree structures in different sectors and in different disciplines. The least compatible sector seems to be the non-university sector, which is growing but without sufficient convergence between countries. There are also still many examples of confusing names/nomenclature (e.g. undergraduate "Master" degrees or "academies" focussing on Bachelor education). The integration of lifelong learning as a regular part of higher education and of the qualification framework is a priority in only a relatively small number of countries.

- Mainly organised in undergraduate/postgraduate phases: the movement of convergence towards a two-tier structure continues, through the implementation of reforms previously adopted, the consolidation of Bachelor/Master structures introduced during the last decade and the initiation of reforms in several new countries. There are examples of two-tier structures in ALL disciplines including engineering (few in medicine). There are however also many countries where the Bachelor/Master structure does not concern certain professional curricula, which remain organised in long, one-tier courses. The strongest trend is towards 3-year Bachelors, but there are many examples of Bachelors lasting 3 - 4 years. A limited move towards professional Bachelors is in progress. Several comprehensive plans combine the introduction of Bachelor/Master degrees, credits and accreditation ("the golden triangle of reforms"), mostly in countries that engaged early in the reform process. There is not a similar effort towards convergence at the postgraduate level: there is therefore a need for debate/progress concerning the various types of Master degrees. Admission to Master courses is usually not automatic, at least not for "outside" students.
- Credit accumulation and transfer systems: there is a strong push towards ECTS-compatible credits based on national systems with easy translation into ECTS, or on the adoption of ECTS itself, either by obligation or more often following the strong recommendation of rectors' conferences and/or ministries. There is concern about the potential of divergence in the implementation of the system. The fears that the introduction of credits would deprive universities of the possibility to organise their curricula and oblige them to recognise all imported credits seem to be diminishing.
- Quality assurance: there is a powerful movement towards more quality assurance (new agencies, ENQA network), but in very different ways: unclear relationship between "quality assurance" and "accreditation", applied to all or only part of the higher education system, focussing on programmes (sometimes along subject lines across a whole country) or on institutions, with different types of consequences. The development of "accreditation" is now more easily recognisable than in the Trends I report: many non EU/EEA countries have accreditation, and several others are considering the possibility or have firm plans for a new accreditation agency (separate from the quality assurance agency or combined with it). In some countries that wish to increase the international acceptance of their new degrees, accreditation is seen as a *sine qua non*. There is however still confusion about the benefits and the meaning of accreditation. The decentralised approach to quality assurance/accreditation (sometimes referred to as "meta accreditation") which is being experimented in one country may provide inspiration for European mechanisms based on mutual acceptance of quality assurance decisions, respecting national and subject differences and not overloading universities.

### A significant impact in non-signatory countries

- The Trends II report covers six non-signatory countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It does not cover other countries, although it is known that there is interest in e.g. Turkey, Russia and some other CIS countries.
- In these six countries the Bologna Declaration receives strong attention, in particular as a reference for long term structural reforms and as an agenda for change in the whole of Europe.
- In the countries of former Yugoslavia and in Albania the structure of curricula, degrees and institutions differs significantly from the principles of the Bologna Declaration, but the reform process has started or is in progress and is supported by various European programmes and initiatives. The reform prepared for Kosovo by the International Administration took direct inspiration from the Bologna Declaration. A major difficulty for the development of the kind of curricula envisaged by the Bologna Declaration is the fragmentation of universities into independent faculties (resulting in

inflexible mono-disciplinary curricula) in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

- The higher education system in Cyprus is already largely in line with the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

## Some indications and directions for the future

- In future priority attention should be paid to :
  - the challenge of readability of the Master level;
  - fostering convergence in the college/polytechnic sector;
  - the reform/adaptation of curricula at higher education institutions that have adopted or are adopting a two-tier articulation (there are good examples showing the way towards shorter, more broadly based and relevant Bachelors in all areas);
  - the development of quality assurance mechanisms extending to the European level *bona fide* quality labels earned at the national or regional level; ENQA is likely to have a major role and responsibility in meeting this challenge;
  - external aspects, in particular concerning the attractiveness and credibility of European higher education at the global level;
  - support to the process of system reforms and curricular renovation in Southeast European countries.
- Some fears which were initially felt from the Bologna Declaration seem to be diminishing or even vanishing. It is now in general accepted that:
  - the Declaration does not challenge the diversity of systems and disciplines, but rather to promote it and organise it;
  - it is fully compatible with binary systems;
  - credit systems do not deprive universities of the possibility to organise their curricula in a coherent way, and do not oblige them to accept without discrimination all credits which students would like to transfer;
  - there are various ways in which degrees can be "relevant to the labour market" and the need is for a diversity of first degrees opening possibilities in the labour market and/or the way to various types of postgraduate studies.
- As the process develops, there is a need and a demand for:
  - the reconfirmation of the main aims and principles of the Bologna Declaration, in order to underpin its role as a reference for long term reforms and as a European agenda of change;
  - more co-ordination, in particular concerning the implementation of ECTS and the profile of Bachelor and Master degrees, in order to avoid that too much variance creates a new type of obstacles and annihilates the benefits of the convergence process.
- The general trend towards diversified systems (with diverse institutions offering a variety of Bachelors, a variety of Masters and various types of "bridges" allowing students to change track) points in the direction of a network, rather than a ladder of qualifications:
  - the continuation of long one-tier curricula in a limited number of areas does not contradict the overall objectives and principles of the Bologna Declaration (even though there is no convincing argument – except maybe in medicine- that the adoption of a two-tier structure would not provide significant benefits);
  - even though the main direction is towards 3-year Bachelors, any European system needs to accommodate first degrees with diverse purpose, orientation and profile requiring the equivalent in credits of 3 to 4 years of full time study. Extended first degrees would not pose any difficulty if

they formed a common European base in a given subject area (e.g. engineering); otherwise, it would be useful to distinguish them from other Bachelor degrees (e.g. by calling them "advanced" Bachelor or Honours degrees").

- There is still a growing need for information about how the main issues are seen and addressed elsewhere in Europe and in the world:
  - even more than hitherto, progress towards more convergence will be dependent on the availability of comparative studies, the dissemination of good practice and the tracking of problem areas;
  - in the vocabulary for higher education as a whole (e.g. "binary", "two-tier", "non-university", "accreditation") and in the nomenclature of degrees there are certain confusions or inconsistencies to which attention should be paid (e.g. what is postgraduate, name of certain degrees or institutions and their translation into English).
- The marked growth of the attention given to the "external" dimension of the process and to the development of tools/plans to make national higher education more attractive at home, in Europe and in the world should continue. The fact that this process could be made easier and more successful if it had a European dimension has not yet been acknowledged: European degrees will not be generally accepted in the world if they are not generally accepted in Europe.
- Future progress towards comparable qualifications requires additional work at the European level within particular subject or professional areas. A series of publications or databases on studies in Europe in all major subject areas would enhance comparability and mobility both within Europe and with the rest of the world.

Finally, it seems important to point out that the future of the Bologna process and indeed of European higher education is bound to be related to two fundamental principles which could guide all future action :

- students in Europe have a need and a *right* to study for degrees that can effectively be used in Europe, not just in the country/region where they were earned;
- a major responsibility of higher education institutions and governments in Europe is to ensure that they take all steps needed to be in a position to award this type of qualifications to their students.

## Message from the Salamanca Convention of European higher education institutions

### **Shaping the European Higher Education Area**

*Over 300 European higher education institutions and their main representative organisations gathered in Salamanca on 29-30 March 2001. Their purpose was to prepare their input to the Prague meeting of the Ministers in charge of higher education in the countries involved in the Bologna process; they have agreed on the following goals, principles and priorities:*

#### **Shaping the future**

European higher education institutions reaffirm their support to the principles of the Bologna Declaration and their commitment to the creation of the European Higher Education Area by the end of the decade. They see the establishing of the European University Association (EUA) in Salamanca to be of both symbolic and practical value in conveying their voice more effectively to governments and society and thus in supporting them shape their own future in the European Higher Education Area.

#### **I. Principles**

##### Autonomy with accountability

Progress requires that European universities be empowered to act in line with the guiding principle of autonomy with accountability. As autonomous and responsible legal, educational and social entities, they confirm their adhesion to the principles of the *Magna Charta Universitatum* of 1988 and, in particular, to that of academic freedom. Thus, universities must be able to shape their strategies, choose their priorities in teaching and research, allocate their resources, profile their curricula and set their criteria for the acceptance of professors and students. European higher education institutions accept the challenges of operating in a competitive environment at home, in Europe and in the world, but to do so they need the necessary managerial freedom, light and supportive regulatory frameworks and fair financing, or they will be placed at a disadvantage in co-operation and competition. The dynamics needed for the completion of the European Higher Education Area will remain unfulfilled or will result in unequal competition, if the current over-regulation and minute administrative and financial control of higher education in many countries is upheld.

Competition serves quality in higher education, is not exclusive of co-operation and cannot be reduced to a commercial concept. Universities in some countries in Europe are not yet in a position to compete on equal terms and are in particular faced with unwanted brain drain within Europe.

##### Education as a public responsibility

The European Higher Education Area must be built on the European traditions of education as a public responsibility; of broad and open access to undergraduate as well as graduate studies; of education for personal development and lifelong learning; and of citizenship as well as of short and long-term social relevance.

#### Research-based higher education

As research is a driving force of higher education, the creation of the European Higher Education Area must go hand in hand with that of the European Research Area.

#### Organising diversity

European higher education is characterised by its diversity in terms of languages, national systems, institutional types and profiles and curricular orientation. At the same time its future depends on its ability to organise this valuable diversity effectively to produce positive outcomes rather than difficulties, and flexibility rather than opacity. Higher education institutions wish to build on convergence - in particular on common denominators shared across borders in a given subject area - and to deal with diversity as an asset, rather than as a reason for non-recognition or exclusion. They are committed to creating sufficient self-regulation in order to ensure the minimum level of cohesion so that their efforts towards compatibility are not undermined by too much variance in the definition and implementation of credits, main degree categories and quality criteria.

## **II. Key issues**

#### Quality as a fundamental building stone

The European Higher Education Area needs to build on academic core values while meeting stakeholders' expectations, i.e., demonstrating quality. Indeed, quality assessment must take into consideration the goals and mission of institutions and programmes. It requires a balance between innovation and tradition, academic excellence and social/economic relevance, the coherence of curricula and students' freedom of choice. It encompasses teaching and research as well as governance and administration, responsiveness to students' needs and the provision of non-educational services. Inherent quality does not suffice, it needs to be demonstrated and guaranteed in order to be acknowledged and trusted by students, partners and society at home, in Europe and in the world.

*Quality is the basic underlying condition for trust, relevance, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness in the European Higher Education Area.*

#### Trust building

As research evaluation has an international dimension so does quality assurance in higher education. In Europe, quality assurance should not be based on a single agency enforcing a common set of standards. The way into the future will be to design mechanisms at European level for the mutual acceptance of quality assurance outcomes, with "accreditation" as one possible option. Such mechanisms should respect national, linguistic and discipline differences and not overload universities.

#### Relevance

Relevance to the European labour market needs to be reflected in different ways in curricula, depending on whether the competencies acquired are for employment after the first or the second degree. Employability in a lifelong learning perspective is best served through the inherent value of quality education, the diversity of approaches and course profiles, the flexibility of programmes with multiple entry and exit points and the development of transversal skills and competencies such as communication and languages, ability to mobilise knowledge, problem solving, team work and social processes.

### Mobility

The free mobility of students, staff and graduates is an essential dimension of the European Higher Education Area. European universities want to foster more mobility - both of the "horizontal" and the "vertical" type - and do not see virtual mobility as a substitute for physical mobility. They are willing to use existing instruments for recognition and mobility (ECTS, Lisbon Convention, Diploma Supplement, NARIC/ENIC network) in a positive and flexible way. In view of the importance of teaching staff with European experience, universities wish to eliminate nationality requirements and other obstacles and disincentives for academic careers in Europe. However, a common European approach to virtual mobility and transnational education is also needed.

### Compatible qualifications at the undergraduate and graduate levels

Higher education institutions endorse the move towards a compatible qualification framework based on a main articulation in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. There is broad agreement that first degrees should require 180 to 240 ECTS points but need to be diverse leading to employment or mainly preparing for further, postgraduate studies. Under certain circumstances a university may decide to establish an integrated curriculum leading directly to a Master-level degree. Subject-based networks have an important role to play in reaching such decisions. Universities are convinced of the benefits of a credit accumulation and transfer system based on ECTS and on their basic right to decide on the acceptability of credits obtained elsewhere.

### Attractiveness

European higher education institutions want to be in a position to attract talent from all over the world. This requires action at institutional, national and European levels. Specific measures include the adaptation of curricula, degrees readable inside and outside Europe, credible quality assurance measures, programmes taught in major world languages, adequate information and marketing, welcoming services for foreign students and scholars, and strategic networking. Success also depends on the speedy removal of prohibitive immigration and labour market regulations.

**European higher education institutions recognise that their students need and demand qualifications which they can use effectively for the purpose of their studies and careers all over Europe. The institutions and their networks and organisations acknowledge their role and responsibility in this regard, and confirm their willingness to organise themselves accordingly within the framework of autonomy.**

*Higher education institutions call on governments, in their national and European contexts, to facilitate and encourage change and to provide a framework for co-ordination and guidance*

towards convergence. They affirm their capacity and willingness to initiate and support progress within a joint endeavour

- to redefine higher education and research for the whole of Europe;
- to reform and rejuvenate curricula and higher education as a whole;
- to enhance and build on the research dimension in higher education;
- to adopt mutually acceptable mechanisms for the evaluation, assurance and certification of quality;
- to build on common denominators with a European dimension and ensure compatibility between diverse institutions, curricula and degrees;
- to promote the mobility of students and staff and the employability of graduates in Europe;
- to support the modernisation efforts of universities in countries where the challenges of the European Higher Education Area are greatest;
- to meet the challenges of being readable, attractive and competitive at home, in Europe and in the world; and
- to continue to consider higher education as an essential public responsibility.

**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.

# **“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 cooperation 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.