

## **DRAFT**

### **The Bologna Process 2020 - The European Higher Education Area in the new decade**

We, ministers, responsible for higher education in the 46 countries of the Bologna Process convened in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, on April 28 and 29, 2009 to take stock of the achievements of the Bologna Process and to establish the priorities for the European Higher Education Area for the next decade.

#### **Preamble**

**1.** In the decade up to 2020 European higher education shall contribute to a Europe of knowledge that is highly creative and innovative. Faced with the demographic challenge of an ageing population Europe can only succeed in this endeavour if it comes to rely on a wide range of talents and capacities. European higher education will therefore be called upon to contribute fully to the advent of the Europe of knowledge by engaging in lifelong learning as well as by widening participation.

**2.** European higher education will also face the major challenge posed by globalisation and technological development leading to new providers and to new types of learning. Student centred learning will empower the students to become active and responsible citizens and to develop the competences that are necessary to address the new challenges. Social and human growth are indispensable components for European citizenship and for the cohesion of our societies.

**3.** Our societies currently face the consequences of a financial crisis with its effects on economic growth. In order to bring about sustainable economic recovery and development, European higher education will strive for innovation on the basis of the traditional yet open-minded unity between teaching and learning in which the latest research findings drive teaching and learning. Higher education is considered a long term investment in people preparing our societies to address the challenges of the decade to come and therefore remains a priority for public investment.

**4.** The European Higher Education Area in 2020 shall be an area where higher education is a public responsibility, regardless of the question whether the institutions are public or private, and where all institutions of higher education are responsive to the wider needs of society and the economy through the diversity of their missions and purposes. The necessary ongoing reform of higher education systems and policies will continue to be firmly embedded in the European values of institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and active participation of students and staff as well as social equity.

#### **I. Achievements and consolidation**

**5.** Over the past decade we have built the European Higher Education Area firmly rooted in Europe's intellectual, scientific and cultural heritage and ambitions and characterised by a permanent sense of cooperation between governments, higher education institutions, students, staff, employers and other stakeholders. The contribution from international institutions and organizations has also been a significant one.

**6.** The Bologna Process has led to greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education and has made it easier for learners to move between them and for institutions to attract students and scholars from other continents. Higher education is being modernized with the adoption of a three-cycle structure including the possibility of a short cycle within or linked to the first cycle; quality assurance guidelines have been adopted, a European register for quality assurance agencies has been created; an

agreement has been reached at European level to adopt qualifications frameworks linked to the overarching European Higher Education Area framework and based on learning outcomes and workload to facilitate recognition. Moreover, the Bologna Process has availed itself of the Diploma Supplement and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System to further increase transparency and recognition of qualifications.

**7.** The objectives set out by the Bologna Declaration and the policies developed in the subsequent years are still valid today. The full and proper implementation of these objectives will require continual momentum after 2010. The European Higher Education Area shall more firmly be based on convergent degree structures and commonly agreed standards and instruments that guarantee the quality and the transparency of provision and qualifications. Progress on agreements for straightforward and fair recognition procedures and decisions supported by the development of national qualifications frameworks remains a priority. This will require continued coordination at the level of the European Higher Education Area and with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

## **II. Better learning for the future: priorities for the decade to come**

**8.** Excellence must be pursued at all levels of higher education in order to properly address the challenges of the new era. Institutions of higher education shall be supported to achieve excellence in those areas where they show their major strengths and which they define as their most relevant mission. Public policies will fully recognise the value of various missions of higher education, from teaching and research through community service to its role in social cohesion and cultural development.

- ***Social dimension: equitable access and completion***

**9.** The student body within higher education should reflect the diversity of Europe's populations. In order for this to happen access into higher education will be widened by fostering the potential of students from socially underrepresented groups and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies. Efforts to achieve equity in higher education will be complemented by actions in other parts of the educational system. Each participating country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and participation of underrepresented groups in higher education to be reached by the end of the next decade.

- ***Lifelong learning***

**10.** Widening participation shall also be achieved through lifelong learning. The latter involves climbing higher up the qualifications ladder, extending knowledge and understanding, gaining new skills and competences or enriching personal growth. Lifelong learning implies that qualifications may be obtained through flexible learning paths, including part-time studies, as well as work based trajectories. This should be accompanied by a system of validation in which the acquired knowledge, skills and other competences are given fair recognition, regardless of whether they have been obtained through traditional study programmes or non-formal learning paths. Intermediate qualifications within the first cycle deserve further development and implementation.

**11.** The implementation of lifelong learning policies requires strong partnerships between public authorities, higher education institutions, students, employers and employees. The Charter on Lifelong Learning developed by the European University Association provides a useful input for defining those partnerships. Successful policies for lifelong learning will include basic principles and procedures for recognition of prior learning and be supported by adequate organisational structures and funding. Important instruments for implementation are the national qualifications frameworks which will be self-certified against the Overarching Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area by 2012. The lifelong learning perspective will shape the institutional practice of each higher education institution.

- ***Employability***

**12.** With a labour market increasingly relying on higher qualifications and requiring deeper levels of expertise higher education should equip students with the knowledge, skills and competences individuals need in their working lives. Employability is empowering the individual to fully seize the opportunities of this changing labour market. Raising initial qualifications as well as maintaining and renewing a skilled workforce will foster employability. A close cooperation between higher education institutions, social partners and students will be further developed. This will allow institutions to be more responsive to employers' needs and employers to better understand the institutional perspective, training responsible, inventive and entrepreneurial graduates for the future. Higher education institutions, together with governments, government agencies and employers, shall improve the provision, accessibility and quality of their careers and employment related services to students and alumni. Work training to support studies and on-the-job learning will be developed for quality enhancement.

- ***Student-centred learning***

**13.** Student centred learning requires new pedagogical approaches and a curriculum focusing on the learner. Curricular reform will thus be an ongoing process leading to high quality, flexible and more individually tailored education paths. Academics, in close cooperation with student representatives, will continue to develop international descriptors, learning outcomes and reference points for a growing number of subject areas.

- ***Education, research and innovation***

**14.** Higher education at all levels should be based on state of the art research thus fostering innovation and creativity in society. In particular, doctoral programmes should respond to the changing demands of a fast-evolving labour market and high quality disciplinary research should increasingly be complemented by inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral programmes, bringing added value for the career development of early stage researchers. Cooperation among institutions of higher education shall be consolidated through the awarding of joint doctoral degrees. The number of people with research competences should increase.

- ***International openness***

**15.** European higher education institutions will be further encouraged to embed their activities in an institutional culture of internationalisation and global collaboration. The attractiveness and openness of European higher education will be highlighted by joint European actions. Competition on a global scale will be complemented by enhanced policy dialogue and cooperation based on partnership with other regions of the world, through the organization of Bologna Policy Fora, involving a variety of stakeholders. A network of national contact points for information and promotion activities will be set up.

Transnational education should be governed by the same guidelines for quality education as those that apply to other education programmes and should adhere to principles of public responsibility, in line with the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education.

- ***More mobility***

**16.** Opportunities for mobility shall be further developed and diversified so that mobility will be considered the rule and no longer the exception. Mobility of students, early stage researchers and staff, embedded in institutional policies to enhance the quality of programmes, strengthens the academic and cultural internationalization of European higher education. Mobility, which is important for personal development and employability, also fosters respect for diversity and a capacity to deal with it. It also encourages linguistic diversity, thus underpinning the multilingual tradition of the European Higher Education Area and it increases cooperation and competition between higher education institutions. It shall be the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area, with a target of at least 20% of the graduates that have been mobile during their studies by 2020. Moreover, there shall be an increase of 20 % of incoming students from third countries.

**17.** In all degree programmes, curricula will be designed in such a way that they provide structured opportunities for mobility. Joint degrees and programmes shall become common practice. Moreover, mobility policies shall bring together political initiatives with a range of practical measures pertaining to the funding of mobility, recognition, available infrastructure, visa and work permit regulations. Flexible study paths and active information policies, full recognition of study achievements, study support and the full portability of grants and loans are necessary requirements. These policies should aim at more mobility of a higher quality and at diversifying its types and scope. It should be conducive to a more balanced flow of incoming and outgoing students across the European Higher Education Area and at a better participation rate from the diverse student body.

**18.** As far as mobility of staff and early stage researchers is concerned, framework conditions will be established to ensure appropriate access to social security and portable pension rights for mobile staff. Career structures should be adapted to facilitate staff mobility, including open recruitment.

- **Data collection and transparency tools**

**19.** Improved and enhanced data collection will help monitor progress made in the attainment of the objectives set out in the social dimension, employability and mobility agendas, as well as in other policy areas, and will serve as a basis for benchmarking.

*Explanatory note: Diverse opinions exist on nr 20, for which either the first text, or the second text below are drafted and will have to be decided upon by Ministers.*

**20. Either:**

In the light of the greater diversification of higher education, the Bologna Process shall [encourage the creation of and will monitor the implementation](#) of new instruments developed inter alia by international institutions and designed to point out the strengths of higher education institutions with diverse mission statements.

These instruments [meant as a mapping of higher education and as information on the performance of institutions of higher education](#) should be relevant information tools for students and academic staff alike; moreover, they should help higher education institutions to compare and identify their relative position, and to strive for excellence. All such instruments, which should be developed with full stakeholder involvement, need to relate closely to quality assurance and recognition and should be based on development of adequate indicators and sound data collection.

**Or:**

In the light of the greater diversification of higher education, the Bologna Process shall [contribute to the monitoring](#) of new instruments developed inter alia by international institutions and designed to point out the strengths of higher education institutions with diverse mission statements.

These instruments should be relevant information tools for students and academic staff alike; moreover, they should help higher education institutions to compare and identify their relative position, and to strive for excellence. All such instruments, which should be developed with full stakeholder involvement, need to relate closely to quality assurance and recognition and should be based on development of adequate indicators and sound data collection.

- **Funding**

**21.** Higher education institutions have gained greater autonomy along with rapidly growing expectations to be responsive to societal needs and to be accountable. Within a framework of public responsibility recognizing that public funding remains a priority, multiple funding is seen as an opportunity to guarantee further sustainable development of higher education institutions and their autonomy.

### **III. The organisational structure and follow-up**

**22.** The present organisational structure of the Bologna Process is endorsed as being fit for purpose. In the future, the Bologna Process will be co-chaired by the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country.

**23.** In order to interact with other policy areas, the BFUG will liaise with experts and policy makers from other fields, like research, immigration, social security and employment.

**24.** We entrust the Bologna Follow-up Group to prepare a work plan to address the challenges identified in this Communiqué, allowing for the future integration of the data collection results and the outcome of the independent assessment of the Bologna Process.

**25.** The monitoring of the progress will continue. Eurostat together with Eurostudent will still be entrusted with data collection as defined above, in co-operation with Eurydice; the work will be monitored by the Bologna Follow-up Group.

**26.** The next review and reporting on the progress made towards the achievement of the objectives for the decade to come will be carried out for the 2012 ministerial meeting.

**27.** We will meet again at the Bologna anniversary conference jointly hosted by Austria and Hungary in Budapest and Vienna on 11-12 March 2010. The next regular ministerial conference will be hosted by Romania in Bucharest in April 2012. The following ministerial conferences will be held in 2015, 2018 and 2020.