

BOLOGNA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE 2010

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MOBILITY AND RECOGNITION

Comments by Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić, UNESCO

Ministers, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honour for UNESCO to be part of this historic event. As a European and a South East European, it also has special personal meaning for me to be present at this launch of the European Higher Education Area.

We are holding this event, symbolically, in two beautiful cities, Budapest and Vienna as a reminder of the journey we have travelled. The creation of the European Higher Education Area is another major step in the creation of an integrated Europe.

Central to the European Higher Education Area are the notions of student *mobility* and qualification *recognition*. UNESCO is proud that the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which we developed as a joint instrument with the Council of Europe, is at the heart of the Bologna Process.

Let me remind that the Lisbon Convention is just one of six UNESCO supported regional recognition conventions in a worldwide framework ratified by over 130 countries.

I would like to underline, however, that the Lisbon Convention has marked some major developments and facilitated mobility for students in two important ways. First, it reinforces learners' rights to have their qualifications recognized unless 'a substantial difference can be demonstrated'. Second, it focuses on access to 'reliable and transparent information', including on quality assurance arrangements, a key element in the assessment of qualifications.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention has inspired the revision of two other regional conventions, in Asia and the Pacific and in Africa, that are in the process of being adopted.

The ENIC-NARIC network of national information centres, a good example of collaboration between the EU Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, which was launched right here in Budapest, sixteen years ago, is central to that commitment. Let me remind that it has produced some major transparency tools, such as the Diploma Supplement, to give one example.

Student mobility is now a major global trend in higher education. Numbers grew from less than 2 million in 2000 to over 3 million today. Note also that patterns of mobility are changing. While six countries – three of them in Europe – have traditionally been the major magnets for students; other countries in the Middle East and Asia now seek to become important destinations too.

Despite figures demonstrating the increase in international students studying in Europe, if Europe wishes to promote its global attractiveness, it should provide reliable and transparent information about opportunities to study throughout the European Higher Education Area, not only in the few traditional host countries.

But let me end by expressing the hope, as the representative of an organization of universal coverage, that strengthening higher education within Europe will go hand in hand with the *International Openness* of the Bologna Process. All parts of the world must learn from each other.

The Policy Forum being held in Vienna tomorrow and the MERIC network within the Euro-Mediterranean Area that a Ministerial Conference will discuss in Slovenia next month are examples of good steps in this direction.

This launch of the European Higher Education Area is an important milestone to celebrate. However, the dynamics of global higher education are ever-changing, as demonstrated by the UNESCO 2009 World Conference on Higher Education, so there is much more work yet to be done, in Europe and beyond.

Thank you.